April 1934

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Adventure

A thrilling novel of desert war and the Foreign Legion—

THE REST CURE

by

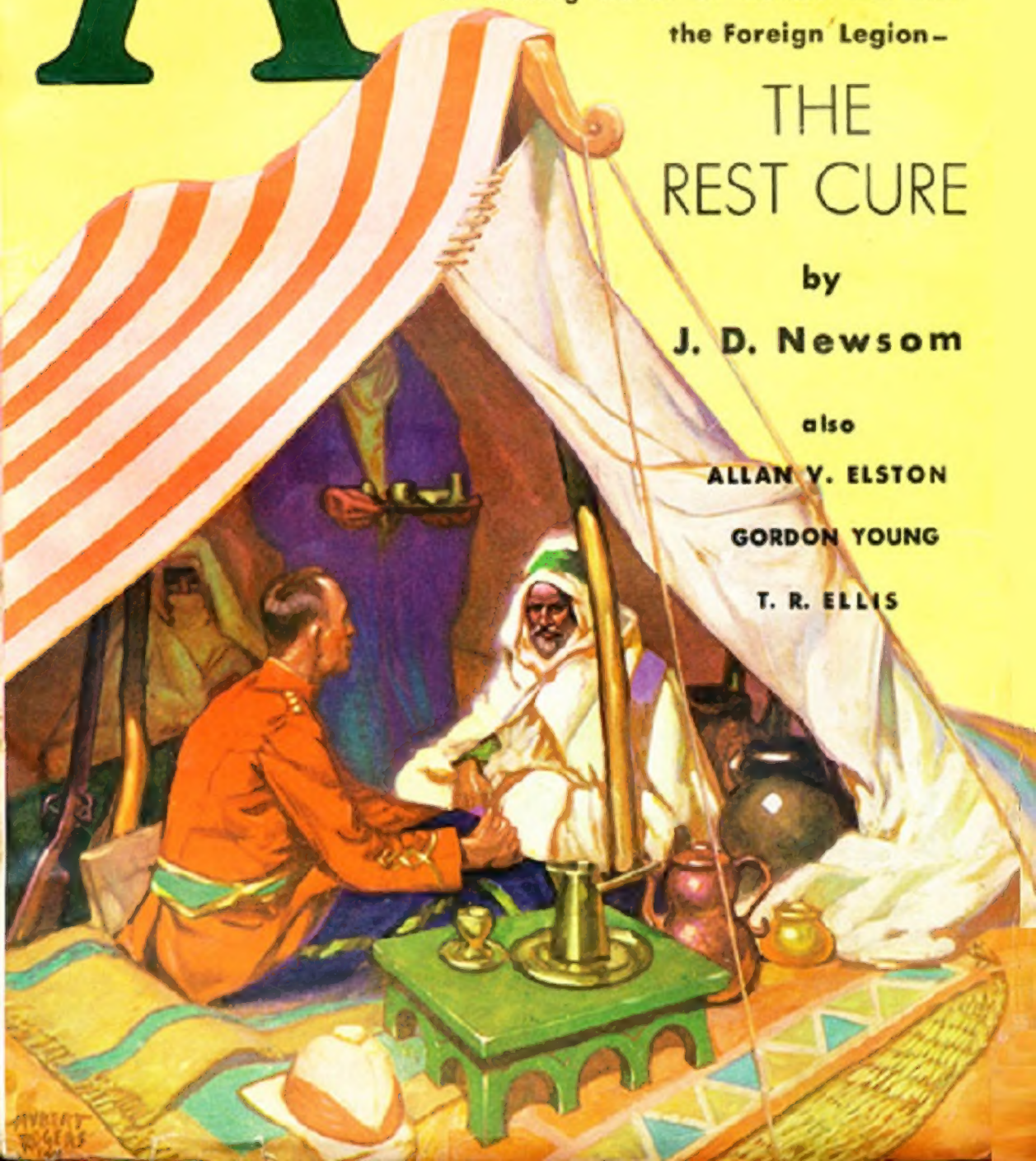
J. D. Newsom

also

ALLAN V. ELSTON

GORDON YOUNG

T. R. ELLIS



Adventure
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No. 4

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EDITOR

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BRRRAP!

Isadore Simonski hurled back the covers and sat up, one leg hanging over the side of the bed. In his hand he gripped an automatic which had been tucked beneath his pillow.

The sound came again, louder, sharper than ever, beating against his ears. Out of the corner of his eye he saw something move on the far side of the room. Gritting his teeth, he fired.

"Hey!" he called out in a strangled voice. "Hey, Dan! Machine guns! They've found us!"

Before the words were out of his mouth Dan Linton was out of bed, squirming on the floor in a tangle of sheets and blankets. A bare leg appeared first, then an arm; finally he fought clear of the white cocoon and struggled to his knees.

"What's happened?" he demanded, peering wildly about. "Where's my gat?"

No answer came from Simonski, who was beginning to realize that he was not in New York at all, but in Paris, in a lavishly appointed suite at the Hotel Scribe. The suspicious "something" on the far side of the room was not a gangster armed with a light machine gun, but a curtain fluttering in the breeze. The staccato roar which had torn him out of a sound sleep was being caused by the pneumatic riveters at work on a new building next door.

A sheepish grin straggled across his pinched, careworn face.

"I thought it was machine guns," he explained. "I was dreaming."

Linton cursed bitterly.

"You dumbbell! You do any more fancy shooting and we'll land in a French prison. Put that rod away quick! Hide the damn thing! And open that window; let the smell out. Somebody'll be along in another half second."

While Simonski was fumbling with the

A Complete Novel of the Foreign Legion by the Author of "Too Tough to Kill"

THE REST CURE

By J. D. NEWSOM

curtain cords, Linton forestalled all inquiries by summoning the *valet de chambre* and demanding to know what the noise was about. The valet knew nothing, for the riveters had drowned out the sound of the shot. He apologized profusely.

"You tell your boss that that noise has got to stop," ordered Linton. "We came here for a rest. What kind of a dump is this, anyway? Waking people up at eight o'clock in the morning!"

And he slammed the door in the valet's face.

"The hole don't show," Simonski assured him. "It's behind the curtain. There ain't nothing to worry about."

Linton helped himself to a cigaret. His hand shook as he struck the match.

"All right," he grunted, "but for the love of Pete, Izzy, don't start anything else. I'm all shot. I can't get used to it—being over here. Always waiting for something to go wrong." He drew a deep breath. "Gosh, it's too good to be true, d'you know that? Every day when I wake up I got to pinch myself just to make sure I ain't in a cell at Auburn."

"That's all over and done with," declared Simonski. "Nothing can go wrong now, Dan. Not a single thing. Nobody knows we're over here."

"They've had time to find out."

"Let 'em find out!" retorted Simonski, brushing a lock of frizzy hair out of his eyes. "They ain't going to cross no three thousand miles of ocean just to take a crack at us. What for should we be worrying all the time? It don't make sense. We're sitting pretty. All we got to do is to have a good time and wait for the dust to settle. Later on maybe we can go back. We came over here for peace and quiet . . ."

"Yeah! Peace and quiet—and listen to those damn riveters! We're out of luck, Izzy. I got a hunch something is going to break wrong. I've had it for a couple of days."

"You've got noives," scoffed Simonski, forgetting his own panic. "Noives! Ain't you never going to get used to being in France? Look, you'll feel better with some breakfast in your stomach once."

He reached for the telephone standing on the handsomely inlaid *guéridon* at the head of the bed and demanded "room soivice" in an imperious voice.

The clatter of the riveters drove them out of the hotel after a hasty meal. As they strolled through the lobby, clerks and flunkies, mistaking them for a pair of bright young American business men, greeted them with deferential smiles. If, however, the management of the hotel had had an inkling of its guests' identity it would have thrown them out on their necks. Gunmen are not welcome at the Scribe, not after, even, they have retired from active business.

Linton and Simonski were doing their best to retire. Four years of intense activity had netted them close on to a quar-

ter of a million dollars and had worn their nerves to a frazzle. Between them they had organized and controlled the vegetable, the bakery and the taxicab rackets. These had been their most profitable undertakings, although at one time during the course of their career they had directed a score of other enterprises, all of them anti-social and thoroughly illegal.

Their success, unfortunately, had aroused many jealousies and as they branched out they had run foul of vested interests in other lines of trade which had fought them tooth and nail. Police, press and rival gangs had pitched into them with savage enthusiasm. First they had lost ground, then, as their own followers turned against them, they had been routed.

They didn't mind very much, for their savings were salted away in six per cent first mortgage bonds and Government securities, and they asked for nothing better than a chance to go into retirement. But they were not allowed to do so. Other men clamored for a slice of the loot. Lawyers bled them white. Old enmities flared up. They were blackmailed and threatened, though they did not belong to the type which can be bullied with impunity. They were forced to shoot their way out of half a dozen tight corners —and almost came to wish they were dead. As a last desperate resort they fled to Europe. On the way to the docks Linton thought he caught sight of a familiar face peering at him out of a passing automobile, but nothing came of it, and they went on board ship with their skins intact.

They had no cause to regret the move. For three weeks they had been literally wallowing in peace and quiet and luxury, riveters or no riveters.

NOTWITHSTANDING Linton's pessimism, the day began pleasantly enough. First they visited the barber shop where a corps of experts massaged, shaved and manicured them; then they adjourned to the Scribe bar for a round of cocktails specially mixed for them by the head barman in person.

After lunch they went to the races at Longchamps, hobnobbing in the *passage* with the élite of cosmopolitan society. No one questioned their right to be there, and the ladies who glanced their way did so with approval, not with scorn. The thought that they had leaped from the bottom of the social ladder to its topmost rung filled them with quiet satisfaction, and after they had imbibed a few slugs of high powered hooch (locally called viskee-soda) they grew so mellow and happy that life itself became a rosy dream.

Incidentally they played the ponies and there was nothing dream-like about the twelve thousand francs they were handed after the third race by the clerk at the *pari-mutuel*.

They played an outsider called Home Sweet Home II because its name made them feel sentimental and homesick.

"You know, Izzy," Linton explained, "that's what I want, a home. A corner house, maybe. You know, with lights in the window and a lil' woman waiting for you. Thash—that's real life, that is. Everything quiet and peaceful."

"And a two-car garage," chimed in Simonski, a faraway look in his eyes, "and a sand box for the kids. We got the money—we can do it in a big way when it's safe to go back."

"When!" echoed Linton. "Gosh, I wonder how long that'll be? Let's put a wad of dough on this pony just for luck. How about it?"

Home Sweet Home II won by a neck.

"Now I tell you somethings," Simonski said soberly as he pocketed his share of the winnings. "We got to be careful, see? Paris is fine, but it ain't going to be fine if we don't steer clear from the bright lights and the ponies and everything. We been throwing money away like drunken sailors. What we should do is to find some nize quiet little town, with a nize hotel, on the seashore maybe . . ."

"Tomorrow," urged Linton.

"For three weeks now we been saying tomorrow!"

"We got to make inquiries, ain't we? We don't know the first thing about this country. We'll start tomorrow for sure—Wednesday, the twenty-third of May. That suit you? I'm fed up on those riveters, but tonight we got something to celebrate. C'mon, Izzy, let's have another snootful just for Home Sweet Home's sake."

So the afternoon passed pleasantly by without a hint of disaster, and though they had not one drink but many they were outwardly quite sober when they returned to the Scribe to dress for dinner. But Nemesis was waiting for them just around the corner: at Paillard's, to be exact, where they dined after a preliminary round of cocktails.

At the very next table sat a very pretty girl modishly undressed by Callot Sœurs, and a lean, straight backed young man in a swallowtail coat. He had a scrubby little mustache, a sharp nose and the incisive manner of a man who knows his own mind.

If Simonski or Linton had had the remotest idea of the havoc this pair of lovers was going to play with their lives they would have got up, dinnerless, and fled. Prescience, however, was not one of their virtues, and after that alcoholic day they were well disposed toward all mankind.

Their acquaintance began when a glass slipped out of Simonski's hand and, in some mysterious fashion, deluged both tables with Montrachet (the most expensive wine on the list). The tablecloths had to be changed. In the midst of the confusion Simonski lamented his clumsiness, talking over and around and beneath a barrage of busy waiters.

"It is nothing," the girl assured him in quite good English.

"But it is!" cried Simonski, wringing his hands. "I have spotted your dress maybe. Such a pretty dress!"

"Pray do not mention it," snapped the young man. "As madame has said, it is nothing."

When the waiters departed the couple tried to put the odious foreigners out of their minds and resume their *tête-à-tête*. But the ice had been broken and the foreigners, with grim determination, refused to be cold shouldered.

They were insult proof and glare proof. They introduced themselves—big business men—executives—in France to put over a big deal—biggest ever . . . Glad to meet any Frenchman. They insisted on shaking hands with the man. They bowed gallantly to the girl. Remembering his school history, Linton mentioned Lafayette.

"Lafayette," the girl said acidly, drawing away from the alcoholic breaths blowing in a gale across her face. "We have a department store by that name in Paris."

If this was meant to be a snub it failed to register.

"Must be thinking of some other fellow." Linton smiled. "I used to know a man by the name of Duffy . . ."

"Your repast grows cold," the man pointed out, white with anger. "May I suggest, messieurs, that you give it your whole attention?"

GLADLY, he would have paid any money for the privilege of kicking them out of the restaurant. He refrained from doing so for the lady's sake. She happened to be somebody else's wife, a fact which compelled them both to avoid any unnecessary notoriety.

The situation grew steadily worse. Linton and Simonski, bursting with affection, hitched their chairs over inch by inch until their elbows rested on the adjoining table. They didn't want to eat; they wanted to talk about themselves.

"Y'see," explained Linton, "what we're after is rest and quiet."

"That is, when we close this big deal," added Simonski, looking as wise as an owl.

"We been under a big strain, see? What with mergers and things like that. And when it's all over we're going to quit everything and take a long vacation. Coupla years maybe. My doctor—"

"But always we got to keep in touch with the home office. Our noives is shot to pieces, but—"

"Ah!" commented their victim, speaking through clenched teeth. "Indeed!" He turned his back on Simonski. "Now, my dear, as I was saying," he began. "As I was telling you—"

"Yes?" murmured the girl.

"Now as I was saying," Linton went on, "we don't know nothin' about this country, see? It must be full of nice places—quiet places; the sort of place where you could lay low."

"*Rest*," Simonski corrected him. "What you mean lay low? It is rest you should say. Now, mister, if you should know of a good place—"

"Try a sanitarium."

"No, no! We ain't sick. What we want is pleasant surroundings and exercise. We got to get out in the country somewheres."

"You know how it is," Linton told the shuddering girl. "We been burning the candle at both ends. We're played out."

The man swallowed hard. His eyes were bilious as he said:

"There is a place of the most admirable that I know of. It would do you much good. Yes. Fresh air, pleasant surroundings, exercise; you should, by all means, join the Foreign Legion."

"The what?" inquired Linton, a loose grin spreading across his rugged countenance.

"The regiment known as the Foreign Legion. It is ideal for—er—gentlemen in search of peace and quiet."

"A hot one, that is!" Simonski laughed. "What for should we join this French army with all the money we got saved up?"

"To rest," snarled the man. "To exercise. Really, it is an enjoyable life. You are young and vigorous. It would do you good."

"Yeah?" jeered Linton. "I read something about that outfit. The bird who wrote the piece said—"

"All propaganda," the man declared. "Lying propaganda. It is a wonderful life. Africa—palm trees—the desert—Arabs and camels. You see the world at no expense. And you can enlist without difficulty at the nearest recruiting office."

"And get killed! Say, listen, you got me wrong. I'm a business man."

"Many business men join the Legion for a rest," the informant went on, warming up to his subject. "Especially," he added malevolently, "gentlemen who wish to keep out of the public eye."

"Oh, René," pleaded the girl, who was afraid the two pests might be offended and grow violent, "do be careful, please, For my sake."

"I *am* being careful," he assured her. "I speak for these—ah—gentlemen's own benefit. They have asked me a question. I am answering it to the best of my ability. In the Legion there are artists, teachers, lawyers, doctors—all sorts and conditions of men. And as for getting killed, *mon dieu!* you have but to read the papers. Everything is tranquility itself in our colonies. Africa, Indo-China, Madagascar? Why, they are safer than some districts of this very city."

"How about Deauville or Nice?" suggested Linton, who had seen the names on posters in the windows of travel agencies. "That's the sort of thing we're after, only something not so toney."

"The place for you," the man summed up, "is the Legion. It is the one suggestion I have to offer."

He glanced at the girl, raising one eyebrow. She nodded. They stood up, abandoning all hope of ever finishing the ghastly meal. As he helped her put on her wrap, he spoke over his shoulder to the flabbergasted foreigners.

"Yes, follow my advice and enlist. You will be quite at home in the Legion—its discipline would be good for swine of your species."

He walked away quickly before they had time to find a suitable retort.

"I'd like to bump him off," grumbled Linton. "I wonder who he thinks we are, anyway? A hell of a guy, he is!"

"Forget him," urged Simonski. "We could buy him out and not know the difference. He wasn't nobody to talk so big."

But the zest had gone out of the party,

and they did not recover their high spirits until much later in the night, after they had cracked a bottle of champagne at the Cabaret of the Green Hound on the heights of Montmartre.

It was a wild and stormy night at the Green Hound. The air was full of celluloid balls, paper streamers and high pitched laughter. A jazz band hiccoughed insidiously. The dance floor was packed tight with shuffling humanity which ought to have been home in bed. Elderly gentlemen with apoplectic faces wore red paper fezes and pretended to be wild.

The prevailing atmosphere was one of good fellowship and conviviality. Gone was the decorum of Paillard's; gone the icy stares and the frozen mitts. Strange to say, a great many visitors from abroad had discovered this Bohemian haunt, so essentially French that even the flower girl spoke fluent English with a Cockney accent.

IN TEN minutes Linton and Simonski were exchanging light badinage and puff balls with all their neighbors. In another ten minutes they were unavoidably on the best of terms with a party of three: two gray haired ladies of implacable respectability and a bald headed gentleman hailing (marvelous how small the world is) from Philadelphia, Pa.

His name was Garfuss. Mrs. Garfuss, with the pince-nez, was his wife. Emma, the stout lady, was his wife's sister. They were on a tour of Europe. Mr. Garfuss was in the real estate business. He was mighty glad to meet two up-and-coming young New Yorkers. Yes, sir, he certainly was.

The ladies did not share his enthusiasm. They sipped their champagne with the tips of their lips, and after every sip they drank quantities of pure water. Whenever Simonski or Linton drained their glasses, which happened frequently, Mrs. Garfuss and her sister exchanged glances charged with meaning.

They tried to attract Mr. Garfuss's attention several times, but he was too busy talking to bother about their signals. When he found that the New Yorkers were in the taxicab business he started a long discourse about franchises and kindred subjects.

To say that he bored them is to state the case all too mildly. But they couldn't shake him off. He was a leech. The only thing they could do was drink. It helped them to forget the good times they were missing.

At two o'clock the ladies asserted themselves. They declared that they wanted to go home.

"All right," Mr. Garfuss agreed. "We'll take you home. Boys, you're coming along too. Positively. We can sit up awhile longer. There's lots of questions I want to ask you."

"Perhaps they would rather stay here," his wife suggested.

"They would not," he retorted, winking at his unwilling conspirators. "We're going to have a real talk when you girls are safely in bed."

He swept their apologies aside. The champagne had done its work and done it well. They were too limp to protest. He paid all the bills and, still talking a blue streak, bustled them out of the cabaret.

"Taxi?" inquired the doorman, a giant dressed in blue and gold.

"Taxi," agreed Mr. Garfuss. "A big one. Big enough to hold five."

The doorman blew a shrill blast on a silver whistle. And nothing happened. Two taxis were drawn up by the curb, a hundred yards away, outside a dingy little café. The drivers were indoors, steeling themselves against the coming dawn with hot coffee and cognac.

"One instant," pleaded the doorman, whose professional honor was at stake. "In person, I shall summon the cab—a large one."

He hurried away, his coat tails flapping in the breeze. The chilly night air roused Linton and Simonski from their torpor. They peered uneasily up and down the empty, ill lighted street. Mr. Garfuss was still talking, but they were not listening to him.

The red glare of the sign over the entrance to the Green Hound fell full upon them. It was the very last spot they would have selected to stand and wait. There was no prospect of danger, but . . .

But two men with cloth caps drawn down over their eyes who had been loafing on the far side of the street, sauntered slowly across the roadway. Simultaneously two other men stepped out of a shadowy passage and headed toward the Green Hound.

Up the street the engine of the taxicab was rattling noisily.

"Now what the hell?" said Linton, watching the two men on the sidewalk.

"Pardon me?" inquired Mr. Garfuss. "You were saying—?"

"Watch that guy!" rasped Simonski, cold sober and evil, his lips drawn back off his teeth in a snarl. "It's Hop Duffy."

A shrill squeal came from Mrs. Garfuss.

"Will you kindly tell me—" her husband began indignantly.

Linton had whipped an automatic from his hip pocket. His lean, hard face was chalk white.

"Git them women under cover—quick!" he ordered. "For God's sake, move! Do you want 'em plugged?"

The four men had quickened their pace. One of them broke into a run. There was a flash—a muffled explosion—a bullet sang past Mr. Garfuss's ear. He didn't wait for more. Herding his women before him, he crashed through the swing doors of the Green Hound.

Outside things were happening at high speed. Dodging behind a lamp post, Simonski pumped lead into his assailants. One of them dropped face foremost on to the cobbles. Linton, standing flat-footed in the middle of the sidewalk, took careful aim, fired slowly. His third shot brought down a stocky, thickset man in a light gray overcoat, who rolled over in the gutter.

His collapse marked the end of the fight. The two survivors turned and fled, hotly pursued by Linton and Simonski, who were themselves pursued at a safe distance by a horde of people, all of them clamoring for vengeance.

"It was Duffy all right," panted Linton. "I thought I saw him on the way to the pier. I got him good and plenty."

"Keep going," urged Simonski, swerving into a narrow side street. "Oy, what a night! What a night!"

Luck favored them. The side street was not a street at all, but a long flight of steps going down the side of the steep hill. They reached the bottom before the crowd spilled over the top landing. The shouts receded and died away.

"Ease up," cautioned Linton. "Walk, don't run."

They came to a broad avenue. A chauffeur, spotting their white shirt fronts, hailed them—

"Taxi, messieurs?"

MINUTES later they tottered into their luxurious suite of rooms and locked the door behind them.

"We're ditched," said Linton, dropping into an overstuffed armchair. "Duffy ain't alone." He held his head between his hands and groaned. "What's the use of trying? We haven't a dog's chance."

Simonski was peeling off his dinner clothes, scattering them right and left about the room.

"What for are you waiting?" he demanded. "For the police to come and arrest you here once, you big boob? Or what is it? That fool Garfuss—" he flung his shirt, collar and tie under the wardrobe—"we told him we were stopping here. He will tell the police. Oy! Two men we plugged this time and no alibi. Do you want to be guillotined? They cut off your head over here. We got to beat it."

"Where to?" Linton grumbled. "Just show your nose out of doors and you'll get yours." He cursed bitterly. "Peace and quiet, hell! We can't make the grade—here or anywhere else. The whole damn pack is out after us. I'd like to *give* 'em the dough and be done with it."

"But you can't. It's you they want,

and me. Paris—I knew it all along. We should not have stayed here."

"That's what I was saying first thing this morning. We should have gone to a little town by the seashore or in the mountains."

"We're going to jail if you don't hurry."

"They'll get us wherever we go now. We don't know a thing about this burg. I'll bet you some of the gang are hanging around this dump right this minute."

"Not now, but they will be as soon as they find out about Duffy. Snap out of it. I know where I'm going."

"Yeah? You do?"

"Sure, I'm going to join this Foreign Legion that guy was talking about."

Linton sat up, scratching the top of his head.

"You ain't crazy by any chance, Izzy?"

"Me, crazy? I should say not. I was thinking in the taxicab coming home. We're cornered. Either we get snuffed out or the police round us up. We can't go nowhere in France without all these identification papers they make you carry. We don't know nobody. Well, suppose we join this Legion; we spend no money in the army, we live cheap, and we're under cover. Afterward we can go home—settle down somewheres out West maybe."

Linton was grinning from ear to ear.

"Say, maybe you ain't lit on a bright idea!" he cried. "Boy, I'm with you. Soldiering, whichever way you look at it, is better'n prison—better'n being a stiff. We'll get plenty of time to rest." He chuckled. "I ain't never met a soldier yet who wasn't a lazy bum."

Simonski paused in the act of knotting a classy blue tie with white polka dots.

"I wonder what that guy would think did he know we are following his advice?" he pondered. "Without him where would we be now?"

"In the soup, I guess," commented Linton, pawing through his wardrobe trunk in search of a street suit. "Do we leave everything?"

"Everything except your rod. We ain't at the barracks yet."

"And our dough?"

Simonski gave him a look charged with infinite scorn.

"You should ask me such a question!" he snorted. "What for should we leave our good money to the dicks?"

The night porter was not at all surprised when they reappeared in the hotel lobby. All foreigners, according to his experience, were crazy. The only difference between them was that some were crazier than others. He wasn't even astonished when, as a parting gift, Linton handed him fifty francs.

As they went out the front door they passed a brace of large, flat footed policemen coming in. They breezed down the street without once looking back. There was no hue and cry. Nothing. Silence. A milk cart rattled by, its tin cans jangling. More silence. It was half past three o'clock. All Paris snored. A vast emptiness surrounded them. Their footsteps echoed against the blank, tightly shuttered housefronts. And the sound made them shudder.

Mercifully, in front of the opera, they found a prowling cab driven by a Russian refugee, who had once been a lieutenant-colonel in Wrangel's army. Misfortune had made him tolerant of other people's idiosyncrasies. He asked no questions. Also he spoke a little English.

"Drive anywhere," Linton told him. "Just keep on driving."

"Anywhere?" repeated the ex-lieutenant-colonel. "*Bien.*"

He drove them out to the quiet little town of Meulan, where, in the gray light of dawn, they drank steaming coffee at the *estaminet* by the station among honest teamsters and railroad men.

"Y'see," explained Linton, growing confidential, "we're going to enlist—in the Legion."

He paused to watch the effect of his words on the chauffeur-colonel, but the latter displayed no emotion whatsoever.

"The Legion," he commented, tugging at his mustache. "*Bien.*"

"You know what that is?" insisted Simonski.

"The French Foreign Legion? Of course. Everybody knows. There are many Russians in it today."

"Think it'll suit us? You know what I mean—is it all right?"

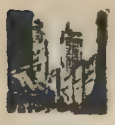
The colonel shrugged his shoulders.

"One must choose one's own life."

"There's something in that," conceded Linton. Then, after a pause, he added defiantly, "Well, we've chosen. We're all set. Can you drive us back to the recruiting office? It ought to be open now."

"The recruiting office?" The colonel nodded. "*Bien.*"

The leap they were about to take into the unknown did not interest him in the least. And they found during the next few hours that his attitude was shared by every single man with whom they came in contact. Nobody, at headquarters of the Paris garrison, cared whether they enlisted or not. There was no glad-hand welcome. Bureaucrats sat entrenched in musty offices behind red tape entanglements. A strong odor of mold, creosote and stale tobacco smoke pervaded the entire building. They were destined to come across that "institutional smell" again and again in many out-of-the-way places.



THEY had trouble locating the right office. Not a soul understood a word of English. In fact, the troopers seemed to make a point of being as obtuse as possible. They cupped their hands behind their ears, they frowned, they shrugged their shoulders, and they ended up by laughing their heads off when one bright young lad chanted—

"Oh, yess, veree well, sank you—" in a high pitched, nasal voice.

At last a noncommissioned officer was found who was able to translate "Legion" into the French "*Légion*"; a feat which won loud applause from the pen-pushing warriors.

After that the wheels of the administrative machinery began to revolve.

A crabbed sergeant with a bad head cold made a note of their names, ages and nationalities. Then he told them to sit down on a bench by the wall. They sat. Time passed. Minutes grew into hours.

"Well," yawned Linton, "by the looks of things I guess we're going to have a good long rest. Lord, I'm tired!"

"We'll have to learn French," muttered Simonski. "Ought to have a dictionary—a diction—"

Exhausted, they slept.

"Brump!" said the sergeant.

They awoke to find an officer staring down at them. He had round, fishy eyes and a goatee after the style of Napoleon III. He glared at them so balefully that, in self-defence, they stood up.

"Legion?" he inquired in a loud voice.

"Yes," they both agreed.

He appeared to doubt their sanity.

"Legion?" he repeated, shaking his head negatively from side to side.

They nodded theirs up and down.

He held up his right hand and counted his digits one by one.

"*Cinq ans,*" he said, shouting in their faces. "*Oui? Yes? C'est long, cinq ans.*"

"So you say," agreed Linton. "I wonder if we're in the right dump?" he asked Simonski. "They're all bughouse in here. What's he counting his fingers for? If he starts sucking his thumb I'm going to beat it."

"I know," exclaimed Simonski. "He means it's a five-year hitch."

"Suffering cats!" ejaculated Linton, sitting down heavily and mopping his damp forehead.

"Take it or leave it. We do five years in the army or—*you* can go outside and see what happens to you once."

"No?" inquired the officer, scowling darkly. "No? No Legion?"

"Sure, plenty Legion," Simonski assured him, adopting the same kind of baby talk. "Me, Legion; him, Legion. Five years. O. K."

"Discipline," insisted the officer. "*Très-stricte! Très dure!*" He squared his shoulders and looked stern. "*Il ne faudra pas changer d'avis quand il sera trop tard. Vous en pâtirez.*"*

"He gives me a pain in the neck," commented Linton. "What the heck is it all about? You understand the lingo, Izzy? Don't he want us?"

"Maybe he wants to see our passports," Simonski suggested, fishing the document out of an inside pocket.

But the officer refused to look at it. The Legion accepts its recruits at their face value. It is not interested in their antecedents. Provided they are physically sound it does not care whether they are rogues or saints. Rogues, however, make the best soldiers. With nothing to lose and everything to gain they submit more readily to the heavy handed discipline of the *Régiment Étranger*.

Simonski put the passport away.

"It's beyond me," he confessed. "Maybe you're right. Maybe he's giving us the air."

Gloom weighed down upon them.

The officer made another incomprehensible remark. Suddenly his solemn contenance became wreathed in smiles. He shook Linton's hand, patted Simonski on the shoulder—turned on his heel and stamped out of the room.

II

THE REST of the performance went off without a hitch. A doctor passed them fit for duty; they signed their enlistment papers; the sergeant gave them two railroad tickets and five francs subsistence allowance—and the business was over. They were soldiers of the second class of the Foreign Legion.

The sergeant, a man of few words, did not waste his breath trying to tell them how to get to the station. He let them sit on the bench all afternoon At five o'clock, when the office closed, an orderly took them in tow. He would have walked them from one end of Paris to the other, but he was quick to understand Linton when the latter pronounced the magic word "taxi".

They rewarded his perspicacity with a hundred-franc tip, which convinced him that they were American millionaires in disguise. He went out of his way to help them. At the station he buttonholed an interpreter from a travel agency and used him as a go-between.

"'E says," explained the interpreter, a snub nosed Londoner, "'e says you got to travel third clawss on them free passes, and 'e says you'd be better orf, if you want to spend the money, in a first clawss carriage. You could eat in the dining car."

"Sounds good to me," conceded Linton. "What we want is peace and quiet."

"Ow!" exclaimed the interpreter, clapping one hand over his mouth. "Peace and quiet in the Legion, what ho!"

"Sure," retorted Simonski with elaborate unconcern. "Why not? We're doing this thing in style."

"Well, I ain't one for prying into other people's affairs, as you might say. It tykes all kinds to myke the world. If you gentlemen want to travel first clawss, why Hi'll be pleased to 'elp you buy your tickets."

When the train pulled out of the station they were comfortably seated in the dining car, drinking Manhattan cocktails.

"Kid," chuckled Linton, "we done it—a clean getaway. We're sitting pretty. Here's bumps!"

They ordered another round.

"Ain't it a swell sleeper we got?" said Simonski. "After dinner I'm going to hit the hay. Our troubles is over."

So they ordered another round. By the time the first course was served they were back to normal again, carefree and happy.

They were busily drinking their soup—the first food they had had since early morning—when a stranger came and sat at their table, beside Simonski.

Linton looked up, and found himself staring straight into the face of their old acquaintance, the man who had advised the Legion at Paillard's. He put down his bouillon cup with a bang.

* "Don't change your mind when it's too late. You'll be sorry if you do."

"Izzy!" he cried. "Look who's here!"

Simonski, fearing the worst, recoiled violently, cracking his elbow against the windowsill as his hand went to his hip pocket, but he too burst into glad cries of welcome when he recognized his neighbor.

"Think of meeting you again!" Simonski exclaimed. "If it ain't a coincidence! Glad to see you! You going to Marseilles too? Say, we got a lot to tell you!"

The man, caught as he was unfolding his napkin, raised himself half out of his seat and looked about for a place at some other table. He saw none, for the dining car was packed. He sat down again, transfixing the foreigners with a piercing, soul-shriveling look.

"I wish to have nothing to do with you," he announced, the words falling one by one from his pinched lips. "I do not desire to converse with you. Be kind enough to mind your own business. I shall do likewise." He gave them a stiff necked nod, said "thank you," and picked up the menu which he studied with bilious, bloodshot eyes.

"But listen," protested Simonski, "you should hear what I have to tell you."

"Aw, let him be," grunted Linton. "Can't you see he's giving you the ritz. He don't mean a thing."

"He ought to know," Simonski insisted. "He don't understand, that's all . . . Say, mister, you know what you were saying yesterday about the Foreign Legion? Well, you'd be surprised. Do you know what we've done—we've done it. Yes, sir. We've joined the Legion."

"Imbecile," snorted the man.

"It's straight dope. Look—want to see something? Here's the railroad ticket they gave me. See, the name's marked across it in red ink."

ONE LOOK at the strip of pasteboard had a galvanic effect upon the Frenchman. He swung around toward Simonski and snapped:

"What craziness is this? Where did you get that ticket?"

"At the recruiting office, of course. I ain't in the printing business."

"And you?" This to Linton.

"Same here. What's eating you anyway? It was your idea."

"My idea? Ridiculous! Absurd! I know nothing of your motives. I care less. But I demand to know by what right you are in this dining car if you are really recruits! You have no right to be here. If those tickets are genuine you should be in the compartment reserved for Legionnaires."

Linton held the other tickets under his nose.

"How's that? That ought to hold you for awhile."

"You have no right to be in here," the man retorted. "The rank and file is forbidden to travel first class. You will leave this coach instantly!"

"I like your nerve!" jeered Linton, growing hot under the collar. "And who the hell are you to be shooting off your mouth?"

"Who am I?" The man looked them over as though they were a pair of unclean worms. "Me? I am Lieutenant Rillette of the First Regiment of the Foreign Legion. That is who I am! Do you comprehend? I am an officer of the regiment you have joined. Do I make myself clear? Your duty as soldiers is obedience. I am giving you an order. Leave this table at once and go where you belong!"

They were very much impressed—for a couple of seconds.

"Can you tie that!" muttered Linton. Mechanically he raised his glass to his lips and drained it dry. "Suffering pups! An officer. What do you know about that? Where's your uniform if you're an officer?" he went on, his self-assurance returning swiftly. "You look more like a ribbon salesman to me, I'm telling you straight."

The officer refused to argue. He jumped to his feet and stood swaying in the middle of the aisle.

"Go!" he repeated, pointing toward the door.

"Maybe we should do what he says," suggested Simonski, squirming about uncomfortably. "An officer—he can make trouble . . . "

"Sit where you are!" Linton told him. "He can't bulldoze me. Let him prove what he says. We're paying for these eats. And as for you," he addressed the lieutenant out of the corner of his mouth, "in just one minute I'm going to get up and bust you one on the jaw if you don't cool off."

The lieutenant tried to speak. He was so mad that the words would not come. He could only point his finger at the door. The honor, prestige and morale of the French army hung in the balance. Moreover, he had a private grudge against the recruits, who had ruined what should have been a delightful farewell party at Paillard's. It did not make him any the more tolerant.

He had a fiery, imperious temperament, and in the heat of the moment he quite forgot that he was in a P.L.M. dining car, not on the regimental parade ground. He didn't give a damn whether his fellow travelers ate or not: He meant to assert his authority and break the will of these miscreants before they developed any insubordinate habits.

His attitude, however, did not make him popular. Most of the people in the car were standing up, facing him, trying to find out what the row was about. Nobody knew. The noise of the train covered his voice. The service was tied up in knots. A waiter, bearing a great platter heaped with roast leg of lamb and new potatoes, urged the lieutenant to get out of his way. The lieutenant stood like a rock. Onlookers expostulated angrily with him:

"But, monsieur, do you not perceive that you interfere with the attendants! It is inconceivable! We wish to eat, monsieur! Is it that you have lost your reason?"

"I am—" began the lieutenant.

They didn't want to know who he was. They wanted their dinner. There were loud shouts of "Sit down, name of God! Sit down!"

Linton and Simonski were glued to their chairs. They were not sure what the future held in store for them, so instead of taking part in the altercation they gave their undivided attention to their food and wine.

It was a wise move. When the chief steward forced his way up the aisle to the heart of the turmoil he found the lieutenant monopolizing the scene.

"I demand—" Rillette began.

"You'll sit down or you'll be thrown out!" barked the chief steward.

"These men—" Rillette tried again.

"Get out of here!" ordered the chief steward.

He didn't know what the row was about, but he did know that the two foreigners had tipped him royally with every cocktail they had had, and would do so again with the champagne they had ordered.

The lieutenant, traveling in mufti, did not look like any one of any consequence. He would probably order half a bottle of *vin ordinaire* with his meal and would certainly leave not more than a ten per cent *pourboire*. And, anyway, he was turning the dining car into a monkey house.

"These two foreigners have—" shouted the lieutenant.

But he was outshouted by the chief steward. A pretty pass the country was coming to, he asserted, if two peaceful strangers could not eat a meal in peace without being insulted by their hosts.

"They ought to be in the third class coach," Rillette spluttered.

"You hear that?" roared the chief steward, appealing to every one within earshot. "This cretin would compel our guests to travel third class! That is the sort of remark which gives us a bad name abroad. This is a free country—an hospitable country!"

Fifty voices chanted rhythmically:

"Leg-of-lamb! Leg-of-lamb! Leg-of-lamb!"

Knives and forks banged and rattled against plates and glasses.

LIEUTENANT RILLETTE opened his mouth. Two attendants, taking their cue from the chief steward, caught him by the arms and gave him the classical bum's rush from one end of the car to the other. An obliging customer held the door open. They flung him out into the dark and smoky passage. The door closed. The pandemonium subsided.

The chief steward fussed up to the American gentlemen's table. He tapped his forehead significantly with his finger tips.

"You must excuse him. He have the—what is it?—the loose screws in his head, that man. I hope you are not vexed. No? That is excellent. Ah! The American people—so phlegmatic, so calm! They give us the lesson, yes! One moment, messieurs, I bring the champagne."

The service was back to normal again.

"We showed him something." Simonski chuckled. "No officer can throw a big scare into me. You poor boob, you was all ready to leave! And we don't know for sure he was an officer. He was sore, I guess, because we spoke to his girl."

"Is that the way you dope it out?" Linton grinned. "Y' ought to have your eyes tested, Izzy."

The champagne arrived in a bucket filled with cracked ice. Attendants hovered nearby, eager to be of service to the plutocrats. They finished their meal to the last liqueur, the last drop of coffee.

Full fed, at peace with the world, they sauntered back to their reserved compartment and reclined on the well upholstered cushions. Their encounter with the lieutenant had made no particular impression upon their minds. The incident seemed too trivial to be worth bothering about.

"Where are we going, do you know?" Linton inquired dreamily, puffing away at a large, imported cigar. "I'm darned if I do!"

"We ain't going to be troubled by no more of them cheap gangsters like Duffy, that's one thing sure," Simonski asserted. "We'll do our hitch all peaceful and quiet, and then we can go home. I'd like to live out on the coast somewhere."

Just then the train drew up at a station, the first stop since leaving Paris.

Simonski raised the blind.

"It's a place called Dijon," he explained. "You should see—"

Leaving the sentence unfinished, he jerked the blind down.

"That guy's outside," he said hurriedly. "He's talking to a couple of fellows in uniform. They look like cops. They saw me."

"He's a determined sort of cuss, ain't he?" muttered Linton, flicking the ash off his cigar. "Cops—that's a bad noise."

Hobnailed boots came marching down the corridor. The sound of gruff voices reached their ears. Simonski grabbed at his gun, but Linton caught him by the elbow, whispering:

"Keep that rod out of sight! Let 'em have their own way. What the hell do we care how we travel so long's they don't find out about Duffy?"

Some one rapped on the door. In came the conductor, two khaki clad *gendarmes* and Lieutenant Rillette. They filled the narrow compartment to overflowing. In the background hovered a white coated attendant.

"Tickets?" demanded the conductor.

Linton produced two strips of yellow pasteboard—*bona fide* first class tickets.

The conductor and the *gendarmes* turned toward the lieutenant.

"It would seem as though a mistake had been made," the conductor remarked. "I see no reason—"

But the lieutenant was not to be denied. He stepped forward.

"Show the other tickets," he ordered in his precise English. "The military ones. If you resist you will be placed under arrest. Obey instantly!"

Without a word Linton dug down in his waistcoat pocket and brought out the government warrants.

"These?"

"Ah!" said the conductor.

"Ah-ha!" said the *gendarmes.*

And the lieutenant, swelling with triumph, smiled a sarcastic smile.

The conductor made a feeble attempt to defend the culprits.

"They are doing no harm," he observed, "and since they have paid the full fare—"

But the soldiers outnumbered him three to one. Lieutenant Rillette did not even take the trouble to answer him. He barked an order. One *gendarme* laid a heavy hand on Linton's shoulder; the other one took charge of Simonski.

They were hustled out of the coach and marched at a brisk pace toward the rear end of the train. From a third class compartment near the baggage van came raucous shouts, bellows and snatches of drunken song. A bare, brawny arm, holding an empty bottle, dangled over the sill of an open window.

"That's it," said Rillette. "Throw them in with the other swine."

An overpowering stench of stale wine and sweat assailed Linton and Simonski as they were propelled into the compartment. Twelve recruits, cooped up in a space designed to hold no more than ten, protested noisily. Dressed in foul rags, unwashed, unshaved, unbathed, their faces, seen by the dim glow of the oil burning ceiling light, were bestial and grotesque.

THEY came, those recruits, from God alone knows what foul slums and what heart breaking miseries. Suffering, despair and vice were stamped on their features. Behind them lay shattered lives. They were through with responsibilities and hunger and family ties. Ahead lay the unknown: Africa, women, war, the heat of the desert sun, and in the end swift death and oblivion in an unmarked grave.

There were five Germans, two Russians and a Swede. The others were Frenchmen who, for reasons of their own, had assured the recruiting officer that they hailed from Belgium. But one and all, German and Russian, Belgian and Swede, they were roaring drunk on the cheapest of cheap red wine.

Howls of derision greeted Linton and Simonski as they floundered over the outstretched legs. The other recruits made the very natural mistake of judging them by their clothes. They were too neat and tidy, too well dressed, too prosperous looking. Especially too prosperous.

Two ferret faced, narrow shouldered Franco -Belgians, seated in the far corner of the compartment, put their heads together and talked in throaty whispers. A dozen pairs of hungry eyes inspected the newcomers, picking them to pieces, hunting for signs of concealed wealth. A moon faced, loose mouthed Heinie reached up under Linton's arm and ran a calloused paw down the front of his coat.

"*Gelt!*" he laughed as his blunt fingers felt the outline of a wallet beneath the cloth.

His comrades chuckled, licking their chops in anticipation of the happy time they were going to have initiating two white collared fops into the fraternity of roughnecks.

Until the train started nothing much happened. The *gendarmes* were mounting guard on the platform, and their presence was sufficient to restrain the playful instincts of the most inebriated recruit.

There was no place for Linton and Simonski to sit; there was barely enough room for them to stand.

"Tough outfit," drawled Linton, speaking in Simonski's ear, which was pressed close to his mouth as they leaned against the carriage door. "Got your rod handy?"

Simonski nodded dubiously.

"What will happen—" he began.

"Never mind what happens. Throw a scare into 'em. No bunch of half soused bums is going to frisk me. I'll show 'em where they get off if they start anything."

The train pulled out of Dijon station with a jerk. As it gained speed the re-

cruits gained confidence. The two Frenchmen who had been whispering together suddenly got up and came crowding in upon their intended victims. Hell thereupon broke loose. Every man present clamored and fought for his share of the spoils. They meant no harm, of course. They simply wanted to batter the newcomers senseless, rip their offensively clean clothes to ribbons and relieve them of their money.

The program, however, met with a setback. The leading Frenchman made a dive at Simonski—and ran into a hard, bony fist which smashed his jaw over on the side of his face. This wholly unexpected resistance aroused indignant protests. A bull necked German wrapped his arms around Linton's waist and tried to drag him down. Something metallic and unyielding crashed down on his close cropped skull and he passed quietly out of the picture.

The others, fighting among themselves as they tried to get at their prey, suddenly found themselves staring down the muzzles of two large, business-like automatics. Behind the guns they caught a glimpse, not of two terrified *bourgeois*, but of two grim, tight jawed killers in whose eyes there was no hint of fear.

And the turmoil subsided.

"Yeah?" jeered Linton. "Tough guys, ain't you? Come on in, if you're hunting for trouble—you'll get it good and plenty."

The didn't understand a word he said, but his meaning was painfully clear. Bunched close together, they stood motionless, grinning foolishly.

"Open the door, Izzy," Linton went on. "Hop down on the running board. I'll hold 'em."

"Hop?" repeated Simonski. "To where I should hop?"

"Back to our first-class, reserved, sleeping car compartment," grunted Linton. "I'm going to have one decent night's sleep, damn it, if I have to shoot my way through the whole damned French army!"

Minutes later, slightly windblown but otherwise intact, they reentered the first-class coach. The attendant, drowsing on a seat in the corridor, was rather startled by their reappearance, but the sight of a neatly folded bill brought a smile to his lips.

"I comprehend! The messieurs wish to enjoy one last night of tranquillity before facing the army life. It is a natural desire."

Why two fabulously wealthy Americans should choose to join the Foreign Legion was a problem he could not begin to fathom, but he asked no questions.

He wafted them back to their compartment, made up the beds, and conjured whisky and cigars out of thin air with a dexterity born of long practice in dealing with Anglo-Saxon travelers.

AT NINE o'clock the next morning when the train steamed into the station at Marseilles they alighted with the jaunty unconcern of tourists whose consciences are clear and whose pocketbooks are well lined.

The attendant waved them on their way:

"Good luck, gentlemen! Goodby! You will find a soldier waiting by the gate. He takes charge of recruits. A pleasant journey to you!"

They were the last polite words the gentlemen in question were to hear for a long, long time.

Luck was against them from the very beginning. As they stepped down on to the platform Lieutenant Rillette jumped from the next coach. He had changed his civilian suit for a black tunic and scarlet trousers which made him look very tall and soldierly and important. His *képi* was cocked over his right eyebrow; in the crook of his elbow he carried a sword; there were medals on his chest.

He was about to hail a porter when he caught sight of Linton and Simonski. He gave them one piercing glance, sticking out his lower jaw and frowning as though he doubted his own senses. Then, slowly, the amazing truth dawned upon

him and his face became a study of violent and primitive emotions. Indignation, astonishment and anger swept over him at one and the same instant.

"Give him the old ignore," grunted Linton. "He don't mean a thing."

But the lieutenant refused to be ignored. Under normal conditions he would not have condescended to have any dealings with a couple of obscure and insignificant recruits. But in this instance he had a very definite grudge against Simonski and Linton. Twice they had scored off him. Three times was too much. Here at last he was on his own ground. Within calling distance there were soldiers who would see that his orders were enforced. White lipped, his eyes blazing, he stood directly in their path as they headed toward the exit.

"Halt!" he commanded. "I say halt!"

He might as well have saved his breath. They cut him dead, walking past him without so much as the flicker of an eyelash.

A dark flush suffused his cheeks. People were staring at him suspiciously, as though he had gone crazy and were talking to himself. His temper, never at its best early in the morning, gave way completely. Spinning around on his heel, he caught hold of Linton by the coat collar and jerked him to a standstill.

He was so furious that every word of English he had ever known was wiped out of his mind.

"*Légionnaire de faction!*" he brayed. "Legionnaire on duty—this way, on the double!

"Insolent swine," he went on, shaking Linton as hard as he could shake. "We'll tame you soon enough. We'll—"

The next moment Linton's fist crashed into the pit of his stomach. He sat down heavily, skidding across the concrete platform.

Loud shouts from the onlookers. A brave officer had been knocked off his feet. He was being assassinated, to say the least of it. Willing hands raised him off the ground. He was not dead, merely winded; too winded to speak. Indignant citizens surrounded the culprits, threatening them with clenched fists and upraised sticks.

Some bright genius sensed the fact that they were foreigners. An officer had been brutally assaulted by a pair of foreigners! The citizens' indignation boiled over. A patriotic traveling salesman hurled a sample case against Simonski's legs. He lurched unsteadily. A blow full in the face straightened him up. To even matters Linton lifted the salesman off his feet with a well timed uppercut. A stick, whistling through the air, smacked against his cheek, raising a welt from the corner of his mouth to his ear. Blood oozed from the torn skin.

Above the clamor a brassy voice was heard bellowing:

"Attention! They're armed! Take care."

Through the crowd burst a gaunt, leathery faced Legionnaire sergeant with an outsize in service revolvers in his fist. He didn't stop to argue, for he had been warned by the other recruits that these desperate men carried lethal weapons of their own.

Without ceremony he thrust the infuriated civilians aside. Linton, dishevelled and bloody, came up for air.

"Is that one of 'em?" inquired the sergeant.

"*Oui!*" yelled the onlookers.

"*Bon!*" said the sergeant, flattening Linton out with one blow of his ham-like fist.

"And the other bird?" he demanded. "Where's he?"

Simonski was easy to identify. Judging discretion to be the better part of valor, he stood with his hands raised above his head. His right eye was closed, his lips were cut and his coat was ripped open up the back. Now that the danger of being lynched had passed, he was more than willing to surrender unconditionally to the man in uniform.

The sergeant said—

"Hm, you've got an ugly mug, haven't you?" He walloped him over the ear with the muzzle of his revolver.

Simonski curled up on top of Linton. The rest was easy. They were handcuffed, frisked and kicked to their feet.

By that time a squad of policemen had cleared the platform and Lieutenant Rillette strolled up to inspect the prisoners. He was no longer angry. His lips twitched and his eyes sparkled. Evidently, he was very much amused.

"I trust you have learned the salutary lesson," he said to Linton and Simonski. "If you are not *very* careful you will end your lives in the military prison. I could, of course—" he shrugged his shoulders—"have you sent to prison for striking me, your superior officer, but I think you have been sufficiently punished. Let us hope that the next time we meet you will be good, well trained soldiers. Yes.

"Sergeant," he added sharply, "the one charge you need bring against these men is that of carrying unauthorized weapons. That will be all. Take charge!"

Rillette about-turned and swaggered away, well pleased with himself.

The sergeant took charge. He grasped Simonski by the scruff of the neck with his right hand, Linton with his left, and gave them one mighty shove. As they staggered forward he gave them each a kick in the seat of their pants.

"En avant!" he ordered, and though they knew no French they realized instinctively that the words must mean step out. They stepped out without enthusiasm.

III

THE LEGION has been training and taming hard headed customers for close on a hundred years. Its methods may be rough, brutal and harsh, but they are the only methods which have any effect upon its rank and file. Sweet reason and a conciliatory attitude would be wasted upon the drunks, bums, failures and thugs who wash up, after disastrous careers, in the Legion's recruiting offices.

To remold this raw material and fashion it into one of the finest fighting machines on the face of the earth calls not only for genius, but for a heavy hand. The mainspring which makes the wheels go round is fear. Once the fear of God and of their sergeants has been drilled into these scoundrels' hearts they develop, paradoxically enough, a brand of courage which is nothing short of magnificent.

For the large sum of one cent a day, for a flag which is not their own, they sweat and they fight and they die in out-of-the-way places, at the back of beyond. From the hills of the Riff to the Tonkin jungles they have helped blaze the tricolor trail, and the earth is salted down with their bones.

There is inevitably a good deal of wastage. The training period is a period of weeding out, of reforging and remolding and ruthless rejection. The unfit break beneath the strain. They are smashed and thrown aside.

Six full months elapsed from the day Linton and Simonski passed through the gateway of Fort St. Jean at Marseilles, with handcuffs on their wrists, until the time came when they could again begin to call their souls their own.

Those six months were an endless nightmare filled with painful and inexplicable events. From Marseilles they went to Africa, to the regimental depot at Sidi-bel-Abbes. It was quite different from anything they had anticipated. There was no desert, no sheiks, no camels, no beautiful dancing girls. Bel-Abbes was a drab, commonplace, fly infested garrison town, burning hot by day, bitterly cold at night. The surrounding country was given over to olive groves and vineyards and truck farms. It was as prosaic as New York. The town itself was inhabited by French and Spanish tradespeople, all of them making a living off the Legion, all of them despising the Legionnaires.

Weeks went by before they became aware of the town's existence. Their horizon was limited by the dingy, many windowed yellow walls of the barrack

buildings. They learned French by the intuitive method: If and when they didn't understand an order they were promptly shoved into the guardroom. They rarely made the same mistake twice.

They were up before dawn, marching, drilling, peeling potatoes, scrubbing their clothes, scrubbing floors, sweeping the yard. Or else they were in solitary confinement on a bread and water diet, in a vermin infested cell for some heinous offence they didn't even know they had committed.

It was far worse, they both agreed, than Leavenworth or Auburn could ever possibly be. They wished they were dead, but wishing did them no good. They thrived on a diet of hard work, coarse food and hard knocks. When the rumor got abroad that they didn't depend on their pay for liquid refreshments the troopers in the barrack room tried to convince them that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Almost imperceptibly, as they began to adapt themselves to their new life, the pressure lessened. They had time to think and breathe again. The first real stirrings of returning independence came from Simonski, while they were wandering one moonlit night through the back streets of the town.

"Ain't it peaceful and quiet," Linton remarked after a thoughtful pause. "Ain't it slick walking around in an empty street like this—and nothing to worry about. Nobody's goin' to shoot us in the back—no cops to bother you. Gosh, Izzy, I feel like a million dollars."

"Well," admitted Simonski, thinking of his bank balance in New York, "it's piling up, all right. We're saving money."

They were so engrossed that they failed to notice a woman standing expectantly in an open doorway. She hissed as they went by, but they didn't hear her. Their lack of interest made the lady very angry. She went in and slammed the door. The sound echoed in the empty street like a pistol shot.

Instinctively Simonski's right hand groped for a non-existent hip pocket.

"You know," he muttered, shaking his head, "it don't seem right being without a rod."

"What's the matter with your bayonet?" Linton chuckled. "You ain't a real soldier yet, Izzy. It takes time for a guy like you to get acclimatized—the first five years is the worst, so they say."

"That damn toothpick!" Simonski exclaimed bitterly, remembering the hours he had been made to spend prodding a straw-stuffed dummy on a sun scorched exercise ground. "Bayonets is for wops. If ever I have to go into action I want a weapon I can handle."

"Forget that stuff! Action, huh? For the love of Mike don't wish that on me. I got my work cut out steering clear of Groebner. I'm not one of them death and glory boys, not by a long shot."

GROEBNER was their platoon sergeant. A thickset, bull necked, pig headed German, he was the incarnation of all the stern military virtues the two troopers did not possess. He was a past master of the art of driving recruits to suicide.

"It ain't what I want to do what will make any difference," Simonski declared. "It's what they want to do with me in the office. That's what counts, and you know it. When they say march we're going to march like the rest of 'em. A swell place this is to come for a rest cure! But I wish once I had a rod just in case..."

"Yeah," Linton agreed soberly. "Maybe so. It might come in handy at that. But where in hell can you buy a gun in this dump?"

They soon found out. Anything can be purchased at Sidi-bel-Abbes, even objects strictly forbidden by martial law. As elsewhere, it is merely a question of money.

They mentioned the matter to a greasy, pockmarked Greek who ran a notorious dive called La Belle Helene, named after his wife, who was enormously fat, had a mole on her nose and used quantities of scented face powder in lieu

of honest soap.

The Maltese, for a consideration, referred them to a Tangiers Jew who, in turn, put them in touch with an ex-sergeant of Senegalese Tirailleurs. With the latter they got down to brass tacks and after a great deal of haggling bought for their weight in gold two cheap, badly made Belgian automatics and a fistful of cartridges.

Once in possession of these weapons they felt more secure than they had felt for months. The knowledge that at the slightest provocation they could blow off the top of Groebner's head if they chose to do so restored their self-confidence, even though they had no intention of resorting to such violent methods.

The sergeant was quick to detect the change in their attitude and he didn't like it. Nothing short of complete subservience and instant, blind obedience met with his approval.

They drilled with the precision of automatons, they were clean, neat and punctual, they "yessed" him whenever he opened his mouth, but some sixth sense warned him that behind their expressionless masks they were laughing at him. And he didn't allow recruits to laugh at him either openly or up their sleeves.

He called them out of the ranks one day before dismissing the platoon on its return from the rifle butts. For a half hour he left them standing at attention in the courtyard with the midday sun pouring down upon their skulls, while he retired to the sergeant's mess to wash the dust of the road from his throat. Sitting by the open window, glass in hand, he kept an eye on them. Every time they showed any signs of flagging—and they were dressed in full campaign order, with a hundredweight of kit on their backs—he bellowed:

"Five days' detention, Legionnaire Linton, specimen of a camel that you are! When I say at attention I mean at attention. Stiffen those legs, do you hear?

"Simonski, *sale juif*, five days' detention to you too! Keep your hands off your face, damn you! What do I care if all the flies in Africa crawl up your foul nose?"

At the end of the half hour they were very near to complete collapse.

"That ought to put some backbone into you," he grunted. "There's something wrong with you, but you're not going to fool me. You've been forming fours long enough, that's what it is. You're stale. You need some action. A few bullets singing past your ears will put some ginger into you. That's all settled, my lads. I'm going to slate you for the next draft. Dismiss!"

"I knew it," moaned Simonski as they dragged their stiff joints up the staircase to their barrack room. "The next draft—that means Bou-Denib, where all the fighting is. What for should he play us such a dirty trick, Linton? We ain't trained soldiers yet. Such a thing! You can't make a soldier in six months."

In retrospect the half year he had spent at the depot seemed to him to have been one of the most delightful half-years in his life. Sidi-bel-Abbes wasn't such a bad town. In fact, the more he thought about it the more he liked it. And the regimental depot was a home from home, while the canteen was more wonderful than the finest night club on Broadway.

Bou-Denib, on the other hand, had an evil reputation. Old-timers called it the most dangerous outpost in the Tafilalet foothills. The natives thereabouts spent most of their time, according to barrack room gossip, ambushing reconnaissance patrols and torturing the unfortunate Legionnaires who could not blow out their brains before they were captured.

"A complaint we should make," asserted Simonski, who was growing more apprehensive with every passing second. "He knows we ain't fit for the draft."

"And you know where you'll get off if you start squawking," jeered Linton. "Groebner is one hard boiled egg, but—"

"Maybe he don't mean it," Simonski suggested hopefully.

"That bird ain't got no sense of humor. He means it all right. Why, we been

here longer than most rookies. If we hadn't been so dumb learning French we'd have been out of here two months ago, but—" he paused on the top step and tapped Simonski on the shoulder—"but the point is, Izzy, I'm going to make him change his mind. Get me?"

"No," Simonski confessed. "I don't."

A faint, not altogether pleasant smile flashed across Linton's sweaty, dust smeared face.

"It all depends on how you put it to him," he explained. "I got a hunch, Izzy, we could sort of argue him out of it. It's worth trying anyway. If there's one thing I *don't* want to hear again it's the sound of bullets coming at me. We'll talk it over tonight after roll call."

FOR the next fifteen days their conduct was irreproachable. They were under ordinary arrest, which meant that in addition to their routine duties they had to do extra drills and sleep at night on the bare boards in the guardhouse, but they didn't utter a single word of complaint. Even Groebner, a hard man to please, could find no fault with their deportment. At the slightest provocation he would have been only too eager to tack a few more days' detention on to their sentences, but the opportunity was denied him. They had become models of good behavior and docility.

On the night of the sixteenth day, a Saturday, they put on their No. 1 uniforms, polished their square toed, hobnailed boots till they were dazzlingly bright, and marched across the courtyard toward the gate looking as demure and prim as a brace of St. Cyr cadets.

They stopped on the way to look at the latest notices on the bulletin board. Under the heading "Reenforcement Draft, ⅛ R.E.S.H.R." they found their own names staring them in the face.

"Oy!" muttered Simonski, moistening his dry lips with the tip of his tongue. "Too late."

"Too late, nothing!" retorted Linton. "He's in town, ain't he? I'm not going to Bou-Denib, and that's that."

They spotted Sergeant Groebner on the outskirts of the crowd in the Place de la République, where the regimental band was giving its weekly concert for the benefit of soldiers and civilians alike.

The whole town, according to custom, had turned out *en masse* to listen to the music. Tradespeople with their progeny swarming about them paraded slowly beneath the plantain trees festooned with Chinese lanterns. Young clerks from the government offices, strangling inside starched collars three inches high, flirted discreetly with young ladies sandwiched between implacable parents. Legionnaires swaggered truculently through the throng ready to pick a fight with any and every *pekin.** But the civilians punctiliously ignored the soldiers. There was no contact between them. Everything was provincial, proper and sedate.

Groebner leaned against a treetrunk, drinking in the music. His head was thrown back, his eyes were half shut; a smile lingered on his red, beefy face. Music—good music—was his one great weakness. He loved it with Prussian thoroughness. Listening to the regimental band, he ceased to be a hard fisted sergeant of the Legion; it transformed him into an amiable, middle aged man longing for an easy chair, a pipe and a *stein* in front of a log fire in a cottage on the banks of the slow running Spree.

He was a thousand miles away, listening to the mighty chords of Beethoven's Sixth, when something hard and blunt dug him suddenly in the ribs. He came back to earth with a jolt.

His eyes flew open. He found himself staring at the amiable countenance of Soldier of the Second Class Daniel Linton who, standing close beside him, was prodding him in the ribs with a hard object concealed in the pocket of his tunic.

His first thought was that Linton must be drunk. There was no other way of

*Civilian

accounting for such unprecedented conduct. A private digging his sergeant in the ribs! Poking him playfully in the ribs! It was positively indecent.

"What the—" Groebner began.

"Gently!" cautioned Linton. "In my hand, *mon Sergent*, I hold a gun. If you raise your voice I am going to blow a hole through your liver. Be so kind, *mon Sergent*, as not to move."

Groebner was so astounded that his lower jaw hung foolishly open. At the same moment he became acutely aware of the pressure of another gun boring into the small of his back. By twisting his head around he caught a brief glimpse of Soldier of the Second Class Isadore Simonski.

Inarticulate gurgles welled up in the sergeant's throat. He tried to draw himself up, but at the first twitch of his muscles the two guns jabbed sharply into his hide.

"In your boots, *mon Sergent*, I would not do it," Linton warned him. "It's not worth it. You do not want to die now, do you?"

"You louse!" sputtered Groebner, standing perfectly still.

"Shut up!" Linton smiled. "And don't gaze so yearningly at that policeman's back. Just be yourself. Be natural. There! That's much better."

Groebner had come in contact with too many men not to realize that Linton meant exactly what he said. He was not afraid; neither was he anxious to die if he could possibly avoid it. Not just then. He wanted to live long enough to see Linton and Simonski face a firing squad. Their fate, so far as he was concerned, was all settled: court-martial, conviction and execution were merely a matter of days. The only thing for him to do was to save his own hide.

"What's come over you?" he inquired good-humoredly. "Is it a joke? Trying to scare the old sergeant, eh? Ha-ha! It's a good one and no mistake. Lucky for you I'm not a bad fellow! Think of doing such a thing in the Place de la République with the band playing and all these people about! If I should give one shout where would you be?"

"*You'd* be dead," Linton pointed out.

"And you?"

"Let's talk about something else," suggested Linton, grinning from ear to ear. "We'd like you to go for a promenade with us, *mon Sergent*, if you don't mind."

"You must be mad!"

"Don't you believe it. What's more, you're absolutely safe—if you do as you're told. You're going to walk in front of us to the Belle Helene. You know the way, I suppose. Go straight into the back room. We've got something we want to talk over with you in private. Now then, is it yes or no?"

MINUTES later they were seated around a greasy table top in a room cluttered with dilapidated furniture. The air was foul with wine fumes, garlic and stench of cheap perfume. Through the flimsy partition came the rasp of a phonograph blaring Tosti's "Farewell."

Kalitopoulos, the owner, placed a bottle of wine and three glasses on the table. For a moment he stared dubiously at his guests, then with a shrug he walked out, closing the door behind him.

"A drink, *mon Sergent?*" Simonski suggested.

His hand shook as he poured the wine, and the bottle rattled against the glass.

Groebner watched him pityingly.

"Not very steady, are you? I can't blame you. I've heard of men getting twenty years for less than you have done tonight. What's on your minds? Spit it out!"

"It's this way," Linton began in a conversational manner. "We saw our names on the board."

"But you'll never reach Bou-Denib," Groebner assured him. "Bou-Denib is heaven compared to the place you're headed for."

"That's just the point," Linton went on. "We don't want to go to Bou-Denib, and we don't want to go to prison.

We want to stay right here at Bel-Abbes."

Groebner seemed to be threatened with apoplexy. The veins on his neck stood out in blue lumps and cords, and his eyes bulged out of their sockets. The idea that two soldiers of the second class should have the audacity to question a regimental order, signed by the colonel commanding the depot, was so monstrous that he could not grasp it at all.

They didn't *want* to go to Bou-Denib; they *wanted* to stay at Bel-Abbes! They were ordering the complex machinery of the French army in Africa to stand still while they decided what they would condescend to do! There they sat talking about the future, while all the time he knew perfectly well that they were headed straight for the rock pile, if not the firing squad.

The situation was so fantastically impossible that, for want of words, he burst into roars of laughter, waggling his head from side to side, pounding the table with his clenched fist.

The door flew open. Kalitopoulos lumbered into the room. He was ready to yell bloody murder at the sight of the corpse he expected to find, for sergeants do not, as a rule, hobnob with the rank and file of their own free will. But there was no corpse in sight despite the fact that the *patron* was morally certain two automatics were pointing straight at Groebner's belly.

A look of infinite relief dawned in Kalitopoulos's eyes.

"Anything else I can get for you, messieurs?"

"Nothing," hiccoughed Groebner. "Maybe a stretcher later on, but not right now. That can wait."

"I trust it is a friendly party." The *patron* smiled, cocking one wary eye in the direction of Linton's tunic pocket. "This is an orderly establishment—"

"Get out," broke in Linton. "Get out and stay out. You comprehend, friend Kalitos? You are not wanted in here at present. Stay out."

Kalitopoulos bowed himself out with profound apologies.

"So that's settled," commented Groebner. "You want to stay at the depot. What next? Do you want the colonel's wife to ask you in to afternoon tea, or would you rather—"

He left the sentence hanging in midair, for Linton had just placed in front of him two brand new one-thousand franc notes.

There followed a long, empty pause. The phonograph in the next room blared the "Wedding March" from "Lohengrin". Groebner stared at the notes; they represented more actual cash than he had ever had at one time in his possession.

The two Legionnaires emptied, refilled and reemptied their glasses. Simonski wiped the back of his hand across his lips.

"Feel them, *mon Sergent*," he suggested for the sake of saying something. "Touch them! They are genuine."

Groebner could only grunt. He knew damn well they were genuine.

"This is a business proposition," Linton explained. "I speak not the good French, so we must go slowly."

"What the devil are you trying to do?" snorted Groebner, his eyes glued on the notes. "Bribe me?"

"Yes—and no," answered Linton, helping himself to a little more wine, for his lips were as dry as punk. "You are not so young as you used to be, *mon Sergent*. The time approaches when you must leave the army. What becomes of you then?"

Groebner said nothing. He never allowed himself to dwell too much upon his prospects once he returned to civilian life. He would go back to Germany, of course. He might get a job as a porter somewhere if his feet didn't give him too much trouble. It was all very hazy and uncertain. His ambition was to own a tobacconist shop in a small village not far from Hildesheim; but shops cost money, and he hadn't saved a sou.

Linton talked on, making outrageous propositions in a matter-of-fact way. The gist of his argument was that if the sergeant would undertake to have them kept at Sidi-bel-Abbes until their time expired they would pay him every year the

sum of one thousand dollars—a total of five thousand dollars plus a substantial bonus when they quit the army for good.

"Five thousand dollars!" muttered Groebner, touching the notes with the tip ends of his fingers.

It was a fortune. He need never worry about being cold or hungry or out of work. He could have his pick of the tobacco shops from Koenigsberg to Potsdam.

"You can't fool me," he growled. "You wouldn't be in the Legion if you had that much money."

"The day our names come down off the board I'll hand you a check for a thousand dollars," Linton promised.

"Checks—what good is a check to me?"

"If you don't like a check," Simonski put in briskly, "we could have the money telegraphed to you at the post office. But a check is better; open an account with a bank in Germany. Nobody can find out."

Groebner scratched the back of his leathery neck. His mind was going round and round at a dizzy rate. Of course, it could be done. He could pull a few wires in the office. Special jobs were often found for troopers who knew how to go about it in the right way. Linton and Simonski, he realized, were not like the ordinary run of Legionnaires. They were intelligent, wide awake young chaps. Too good to be thrown away in some obscure border fight.

Five thousand dollars, they were offering him! They must be fabulously wealthy. Maybe they were the sons of American millionaires who had joined the Legion for the fun of the thing. Naturally enough, they didn't want to be shot to pieces. The suggestion no longer seemed to be so fantastically impossible.

"This," Linton told him, pushing the notes a little farther across the table, "this is a little on account. A proof of good will. Now, *mon Sergent*, it's up to you . . ."

"A check would be better," Groebner confessed.

And they knew they had won.

"It's not going to be so easy as all that," Groebner went on. "I'll have to speak to the adjutant. Personally, well, I don't mind if you do stay here. It's all one to me—but the adjutant . . ."

"Make your own arrangements. If there's anything we can do let me know. You won't have to spend a sou."

That settled it so far as Groebner was concerned. He would have to work fast, for the draft was scheduled to leave at forty-eight hours' notice.

He stuffed the thousand-franc notes into his pocket and stood up. Two guns covered him instantly.

"What's the verdict?" snapped Linton.

"*Gott in Himmel!*" Groebner exploded. "Put that gun away! I must see the adjutant if you want anything done, you pig head!"

"Fine! How about a drink before you go? We'll make it champagne, if you like."

But Groebner had not lost his last shred of self-respect.

"You can keep your damn champagne," he flung over his shoulder. "Do you think *I* drink with privates?"

And he slammed the door with so much violence that the wall shook.

IV

ONE YEAR — two years — three years . . .

Through the regimental depot at Sidi-bel-Abbes passed an endless stream of men, but Linton and Simonski stayed on forever.

They had what they wanted—peace and rest and quiet. They lived in a gentle torpor, free from all worry and all care. Nothing ever happened.

Every day, to justify their existence, they performed certain routine duties which taxed neither their strength nor their intellects. Simonski labored in the clothing store. His duty, as a Legionnaire and a potential hero, was to see that the stock was kept clean and free from moths. He did his work so well that he was promoted to the rank of corporal.

Linton had an outdoor job. He had been appointed *chef couvreur*, regimental

roofing expert, an arduous task fraught with much responsibility. After each and every storm, whether it be rain or wind or sand, he had to inspect the roof of every military building attached to the depot. In three years he found one leak and replaced eighteen tiles on the eaves of the infirmary. For this achievement he had been made a soldier of the first class with special technical-duty pay.

Moreover, since their transfer to the permanent roll they were allowed to sleep out of barracks, away from the hard mattresses, the bedbugs and the snores of common soldiers. They had rooms, with all the modern conveniences which have reached North Africa, at the Hotel Continental, a decent, well managed establishment catering to commercial travelers and officers' wives.

In all probability they could have wallowed in blissful tranquillity to the day of their discharge if their own conduct had not drawn down upon them the wrath of the powers that be.

The trouble started over a girl by the pleasant name of Elvire, who was really no better than she ought to be. The *patron* of La Belle Helene, to meet the sharp competition of his rivals, imported Elvire from Marseilles on a two weeks' engagement. She sang the latest Parisian song hits in a voice as melodious as a foghorn. She had a wide gash of a mouth, tired eyes, not too much chin, and a snub nose. By no stretch of the imagination could she be called beautiful. Nevertheless she had charm, personality and a vast amount of energy.

At Sidi-bel-Abbes where most women are seared and withered by the heat, she was an immediate success. Even the officers knew all about *la gosse* Elvire before she had been in town more than forty-eight hours. Her climb to fame was meteoric. First she was seen out in the company of a smart young sergeant, then she appeared escorted by an adjutant with a waxed mustache; after the adjutant a lieutenant annexed her; and the lieutenant gave way in turn to a battalion commander with a paunch, and a wife and two children in France.

And then, while her fame was at its height, she made the acquaintance of Corporal Isadore Simonski and Soldier of the First Class Daniel Linton.

"Have dinner with me," urged the corporal. "Me, mademoiselle, I have the suite most private at the Continental."

His French was quite fluent by that time.

"Have dinner with me," chimed in the soldier of the first class, glaring at his superior officer. "It's not that blowhard's suite. It's ours. We both pay for it. Let *me* blow you to a swell dinner."

His French, too, was fluent and colloquial.

Elvire would have been well advised had she allowed the battalion commander to buy her dinner, but she was intrigued by these strange troopers who maintained a suite at the best hotel in town.

She compromised by agreeing to have dinner with both of them at one and the same time. It was not a wise solution. Long before she arrived they were in a cantankerous, argumentative mood. They disagreed as to the food, the drinks and the flowers they ought to set before their guest.

"It's my party!" declared Simonski. "Leave them roses alone! Didn't I ask her first? If you had some good manners, which you ain't got, you'd beat it out of here. I'm telling you straight. For what do you think you are butting in when you know perfectly well it's to have dinner with me she's coming tonight?"

"Don't kid yourself," Linton retorted. "Hell! She was giving me the high sign all the time. D'you know what she said about you? She said—"

"It's a lie," shouted Simonski. "She said nothing to you. I was there all the time."

"Actions speak louder than words, Izzy. Why, just between me and you, that jane—"

"It's a lie! A nize girl like her, she wouldn't so much as look at you."

"Yeah, she's as pure as driven snow." He waggled his hands, holding them palm

upward on a level with his hunched shoulders. "Oy! She's a nize girl," he mimicked. "Maybe she vants to buy a vatch."

Simonski looked him up and down.

"If it's a fight you want you'll get it," he warned. "But it's foolish to fight over a girl," he went on hastily. "No girl is worth a fight between friends. Let's have a drink."

IT WAS a hot night. They had several drinks and went on fighting just the same. In fact, the more they drank the more they fought. However, they were only hurling verbal arguments at each other when Elvire breezed in on the stroke of nine—two hours late—but in the highest of spirits.

"Mam'selle Elvire!" cried Simonski, bustling forward to greet her. "I am enchanted!"

"So am I!" cried Linton, sprinting in ahead and grabbing both her hands. "Elvire, my cabbage, tell that dirty specimen of a cow that you have come here to see me. He's too dumb to understand."

"*Mais, voyons!*" she protested. "I desire to see both of you, is it not?"

"You don't have to be polite," Simonski assured her, thrusting himself in front of Linton and treading heavily on his toes. "He butted in and you didn't want to hurt his feelings, but—"

She pushed them away, threatening them with a long forefinger.

"Bad!" she said. "Boo! Bad, naughty boys. Be calm, my infants. You may squabble when I'm not here. I'm as hungry as a wolf."

"There's roast chicken—" began Simonski.

"He wanted to order pork," Linton broke in. "He simply loves fat pork. My precious cabbage, don't let the sight of his countenance spoil our party. Say the word and I'll have him thrown out. He isn't a soldier at all; he's only an old clothes man."

That was the last straw. Simonski, as a matter of fact, looked very smart and military. His scarlet pants were beautifully creased and his dark blue tunic was decorated with green silk piping. On each sleeve he wore two broad green chevrons denoting his rank.

He shook a clenched fist in Linton's face, shouting:

"I've had enough of this! You'll shut your mouth, Legionnaire Linton, or you'll get out. And that's final!"

"Where do you get that Legionnaire Linton stuff? I'll heave you through the window if you ain't damn careful, Corporal Simonski."

Elvire tried to placate them, for the occupants of the adjoining room were pounding vigorously on the wall. But they didn't hear a word she said. Face to face, white and twitching with anger, they brayed insults at each other.

"See these stripes?" yelled Simonski. "See 'em? I'm a corporal and I'm giving you an order. Stand up to attention when I speak to you!"

Linton laughed at him—a mirthless bark of a laugh.

"For crying out loud! D'you want to know what I think of you and your stripes. Let me tell you something—"

The pounding on the wall was growing more insistent.

"My little friends," Elvire warned them, "you make the great noise. Do you not perceive that the neighbors will complain? I have come to amuse myself, not to listen to your disputes."

"It's him!" Simonski protested, his voice squeaky with indignation. "He's an insubordinate swine, that's what he is. I'll have him locked up."

"A swell corporal you are!" jeered Linton. "Why, he spends his time sorting out moth eaten pants."

Elvire, who had been exhibiting remarkable patience, thereupon lost her temper. And a Marseilles woman with her temper out of control is a most awe inspiring spectacle. What she said to them during the next thirty seconds may not even be hinted at. Her mighty foghorn of a voice hit them full in the face and drowned them out.

She spoke and, having spoken, she snatched the roast chicken, platter and all off the table, and hurled it at Linton's head.

Linton saw the missile whizzing toward him. He ducked just in the nick of time. The platter burst like a bomb against the wall.

The beautiful Elvire gave one last shriek and fled from the room, leaving the door ajar.

For a second they stood stock still, gazing at the grease smeared wall paper. There was brown gravy over everything. It dripped off the crystal pendants on the chandelier.

Linton broke the painful silence.

"That'll hold you for awhile. The chicken is under the sofa, if you're still hungry."

The blast of Elvire's voice had subdued them so thoroughly that they forgot how angry they had been a few seconds before.

"Let's have a dr—" began Simonski.

The word strangled in his throat.

On the threshold stood an officer dressed in a pair of pale blue pajama legs, slippers, and a tunic with three gold stripes on the cuffs. Sewed on the tunic were the ribbons of the Legion of Honor, the *Médaille Militaire*, the *Croix de Guerre*, and sundry other decorations, two rows of them.

He had a bony, emaciated face. There were dark circles under his eyes; his cheeks were sunken in. A long lock of black hair was glued down on his perspiring forehead. He looked sick, feverish and careworn. Furthermore, at the present moment, he looked enraged.

LINTON and Simonski came to attention with a snap that was almost audible. During the three and a half years they had been with the Legion a wholesome respect of their officers had been drilled into them. Their jobs depended upon their ability to pass unnoticed and they knew it. In all Sidi-bel-Abbes it would have been hard to find—off parade—two more punctilious, well disciplined troopers.

But this particular officer was not impressed by their soldierly bearing.

"Hyenas!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing in here? What's all the noise about? Where do you think you are, in a stable? This is supposed to be an hotel. People are trying to sleep."

His features were vaguely familiar, but it was the tone of his voice which aroused memories long dormant at the back of their minds.

Simonski's eyes opened wide and as round as saucers.

"The lieutenant!" he gurgled. "Rillette . . ."

"*Captain* Rillette," rasped the officer, advancing into the room. "You know me, do you? Where the devil have I seen your ugly face before?"

Suddenly he remembered.

"*Ça c'est trop fort!*" he snorted. "That's the limit. You—again! You manner-less swine! Why aren't you in barracks? By what right are you in here, causing a scandal?"

He was interrupted by the arrival in force of the hotel staff: the manager, the chambermaid, the manageress, a waiter and stray domestics armed with brooms. Everybody talked at once, which was rather confusing.

At sight of the wall paper the manageress let out an ear-piercing scream. Her husband, who did not want to lose two such steady customers if it could be avoided, turned upon her vehemently:

"It is nothing. An accident. Control yourself, my good Françoise. These gentlemen will pay for the damage that has been done . . ."

"I don't want them in the house!" stormed his wife. "I never wanted them. One does not know who they are. They give us a bad name all over town. When they first came here, I said—"

"Be silent!"

"Never! And now look at the new wall paper! They have aroused Captain Rillette. This will be the talk of the town. *O, mon dieu*, we shall lose our trade!"

She wrung her hands and wept.

"Stop it!" cried Rillette. "I can't even

hear myself think. Madame Rillette is in the next room. She is alarmed and distressed by the commotion. Do you want me to have your license revoked? I've had enough of this. Shut up, every one of you!"

"What did I tell you?" whimpered the lady.

Her husband took her by the arm and pushed her out into the corridor.

"Françoise," he admonished, "you are not needed here. Go back to the desk, I pray you. The others, *allez!* Back to work. I don't need an audience."

A breathless stillness settled over the room.

"*Mon Capitaine,*" hazarded Simonski, "we wish to apologize for the disturbance. It was unintentional, I assure you. We—"

Rillette cut him short.

"I'll deal with you in just one minute," he promised. He turned toward the manager. "Monsieur Crampon, what, I demand to know, are these men doing in this hotel?"

"They—er—rent these rooms. Yes, *Monsieur le Capitaine,* that's it; they rent these rooms."

"Do you mean to tell me they *live* here?" Rillette demanded, screwing his face up into a tight knot.

"If I may explain—" Simonski put in.

His explanations were not wanted.

"Answer my questions!" Rillette ordered. "Do they live here as a regular thing?"

The manager tried to be diplomatic.

"Of course, I should not have accepted them as guests if they were not in possession of passes signed by Monsieur the Colonel."

"I see. And how long has this been going on?"

"One forgets the exact date," murmured the manager, who, as a civilian, objected to being bullied by any man in uniform. "This is the first time any incident has occurred which, in any way, reflects upon their character, and—"

"Weeks, months, years?" Rillette persisted. "I insist upon being told."

There was no way out of it. The manager shrugged his shoulders.

"At a rough guess I should say two years. Perhaps a few months more. If Monsieur the Captain desires to inspect the hotel register, the register is at his entire disposal."

A look of blank amazement swept across Rillette's careworn features as the truth dawned upon him.

"I don't believe you've seen a day's active service since you enlisted," he said bitterly. "I don't believe you've been five kilometers from Sidi-bel-Abbes! It's almost incredible. You've been living in comfort while brave men have been doing your share of the work. Yes, I remember now; you have money. You've been shielding your damn skins behind your money. Deny it if you can."

HE HAD good cause to be bitter. For the past three years he had been stationed at El-Ghirza, a small oasis lost in the middle of a flat, barren plain midway between the hills of South Morocco and the desert. For three years he had been everlastingly on the move, trying to maintain some semblance of law and order in a district with the haziest of boundaries, peopled by tricky, unruly tribes which fought him openly one minute and knifed his men in the back the next.

He had to be diplomat, soldier and administrator all in one, facing twenty different ways at once, dealing with a hundred problems. To carry out his orders he disposed of a hundred and fifty Legionnaires, jaded, bone weary men, worn out by endless marching and counter-marching on the trail of fast moving, well mounted foes.

The long strain had come to an end when, caught in a murderous ambush, he had dropped with a bullet in his chest and another in his thigh.

At the war ministry, in Paris, where he had spent his convalescent leave, he had been assured that his brilliant services would be rewarded with a staff job at Rabat. On the strength of that information he had married.

He should have known better than to believe anything the bureaucrats told him. He had returned to Africa that morning with his wife and a brand new outfit, all set for a gay honeymoon at Rabat. He had been swiftly disillusioned. The depot commander had ordered him back to El Ghirza. He could not be spared—not yet. His successor had botched things up; he was always clamoring for reenforcements and more reenforcements, and pestering headquarters with his complaints.

The only man fitted for the post was Rillette. He had made himself indispensable. He reminded his chief that he was a married man, that he was still sick, that he had been promised a staff job. The commandant was very sorry, but refused to change his mind. Duty came first. Duty with a capital D. Later on, he swore with his hand on his heart, as soon as the El Ghirza district had been completely pacified, then, with a clear conscience he could recommend Rillette for promotion, honors, and a really important position. In the meantime the only thing for him to do was to go back to El Ghirza as fast as he could go.

Rillette came away from that interview with a chip on either shoulder. The fact that he was being sacrificed for his country's good was no consolation whatsoever.

It did not make him feel any more lenient toward his fellow men to discover that crapulous swine like Linton and Simonski had been loafing in idleness at the depot while he, poor fool that he was, had been sweating his heart out in the desert.

Obviously they hadn't done a stroke of work for months on end. They were plump, well fed and soft as mush.

"So you've been here over three years?" he commented acidly. "That's splendid, isn't it?"

"And never any trouble at all," volunteered the manager, doing his best to assist his steady customers. "Monsieur the Captain, I am sure, will excuse this little escapade—"

"Do you know what you're going to do?" Rillette snapped. "You're going downstairs at once to telephone to the *corps de garde.* Tell them to send a sergeant and a detail of four men over here at once."

The manager opened his mouth, but he was given no opportunity to express any further opinions.

"You'll do as you're told, or I'll have your license revoked," Rillette warned him. "I will not stay here, next door to these ruffians. They have been creating a disturbance in a public place and, *mon dieu*"—his anger flared up suddenly—"they're going straight to the guardroom or I'll know why."

The manager hurried from the room, muttering dark and meaningless threats beneath his breath.

"A corporal, eh?" commented Rillette, admiring the chevrons on Simonski's sleeves. "What heroic action did you perform to earn those stripes?"

"I'm in the clothing warehouse, *mon Capitaine,*" explained Simonski, very much subdued, "and I swear, *mon Capitaine,* I do my work—"

"Shut up! And you—" he turned to Linton—" in what way are you killing time?"

"*Chef couvreur, mon Capitaine.* Roofing repairs promptly performed. Satisfaction guaranteed, *mon Capitaine.*"

"Are you trying to be funny?"

"Certainly not, *mon Capitaine!* Not with you, *mon Capitaine*—" Linton's face was stony. "I take great pride in my profession. My expert knowledge of roofs, gained after long experience, qualifies me for a post which I fill, I believe, with commendable zeal."

Rillette, his fists clenched, his eyes blazing, took a step toward the expert roofer.

"Buffoon," he sneered. "Cheap clown that you are, I'll teach you to laugh at me. You'll laugh out of the other corner of your mouth before I'm through with you."

A faint twinkle of amusement crept into Linton's eyes.

"Far be it from me to laugh at you,

mon Capitaine. I'm bidding my job good-by, that's all. It was a good job while it lasted."

"If I have anything to do with it," promised Rillette, "the only job you'll know from now on is a soldier's job—a pack and a rifle and a mouthful of dust."

"But, *mon Capitaine,*" pleaded Simonski, "I have done my duty . . ."

"Aw, can that stuff," Linton broke in. "For the love of Pete, don't whine. He's got us. He's got us good. Take your beating, Izzy, and don't make a song and dance about it."

Smack! He had no chance to ward off the blow. Rillette's hand caught him full in the mouth. Four livid white finger marks were sharply outlined on his cheek.

"Keep your trap shut in the presence of your officers!" the captain shouted. "Yes, you're through with soft jobs, the pair of you. El Ghirza is the place you're headed for. You're going with *me*—where I can keep an eye on you—where I can make sure your money won't buy you any more privileges."

"Won't that be nice?" drawled Linton.

From the corridor came a faint voice, crying:

"René, *mon chéri,* what is the matter? You're such a long time . . ."

"Nothing is the matter, my precious treasure," Rillette called back. "There's nothing to worry about. I'll be along in two minutes."

V

WHEN the riot started they were sitting in Jelalludin's coffee shop, a notorious dive just around the corner, off the main thoroughfare of El Ghirza.

The dive was out of bounds to all troops, all ranks, because of Jelalludin's chronic inability to comply with the licensing laws. He was not supposed to sell anything stronger than wine to men in uniform, but the temptation to make as much money as possible out of the Dogs of Infidels was irresistible. The stuff he sold—sawdust gin at five sous a mugful—made his customers fighting mad. Two murders and countless brawls had occurred in his shop before the authorities had placed it on the index.

It was a foul dive. A strip of sacking hung over the door, filtering the sunlight which seemed to seep regretfully into the dingy room. The walls, once coated with a blue wash, were cracked and leprous, smeared with finger marks and grease stains. Unprintable mottoes had been gouged out of the dry mud with the point of a nail. Tattered, fly specked illustrations torn from the pages of dubious publications were tacked above the mat covered platforms running the length of the room.

Over the charcoal brazier where Jelalludin roasted his coffee beans hung a strip of cloth on which had been scrawled the words:

Rillette est une vache!
À mort, Rillette!

Legionnaires, by the very nature of things, are not very fussy about their surroundings; but Jelalludin's dump, for dinginess and filth, had no rival within a radius of two hundred kilometers.

Nevertheless, on that particular occasion, it would have been hard to find two more sober minded Legionnaires than Linton and Simonski.

They sat crosslegged on the raised platform, staring vacantly at the steam rising from the cups of mint flavored tea they balanced on their knees.

From the bazaar in the nearby thoroughfare came the drone of many voices. Jelalludin, curled up against the base of the charcoal stove, snored peacefully.

After a long pause Simonski sighed and shook his head.

"It's the eighteenth, ain't it?" he muttered. "That leaves twelve days from April, and thirty-one from May. That's forty-three. We enlisted on the seventh of June. Forty-three and seven, that's exactly fifty days."

Linton dragged his *képi* down over his eyes. He scowled at nothing in particular.

"Who the hell cares?" he grunted. "Fifty days, huh? What's to become of us now those damned lawyers have gypped us out of every red we ever had? They've got us going and they've got us coming. I'd like to bump off a few of those shysters!"

Simonski drew a thumb-marked envelop from his pocket and extracted a letter he had read and reread until he knew it by heart; it was an official notification sent them through their bankers informing them that their funds, with the exception of a few hundred dollars on deposit in Paris, had been confiscated by the State, by the lawyers and by their former friends.

All their plans and hopes had been shot to pieces by that letter. They had little left except very bad reputations and the certainty that if ever they showed up in New York again they would be arrested.

"That's what comes of being so far away," moaned Simonski. "The lousy bums! Think of opening another guy's safety deposit box. I esk you, is that justice? It's them newspaper fellows started it. They couldn't leave us alone. If ever I meet any of 'em—"

"You'll have plenty of chances. Fifty days to go—that ain't much, Izzy. The minute I get home the fireworks are going to start. We made one pile; we can make another! But d'you know, it's a funny thing—" he groped about in his mind, hunting for the right words with which to express himself—"it's going to seem damn queer getting back into civilian clothes again. You can get used to anything if you stick at it long enough, and that's a fact."

"Anything except Rillette," grunted Simonski. "Losing all that dough ain't no worse'n soldiering with him."

"I'll say he's made us sweat blood!" agreed Linton. "Discipline—why, the poor coot don't know the first thing about it. All he can think of is that jane of his. How long since he's been in action? Months, by God!"

And they fell to discussing, from a professional point of view, the merits and demerits of their commander, as if they were veterans interested in nothing but their regiment, instead of amateurs waiting anxiously for their liberation.

Fifteen months had gone by since Rillette had taken upon himself the task of making them do their duty. He had made the process as painful as possible.

Their case had been investigated by no less a person than the colonel commanding the depot. Nothing came of the investigation, for the culprits had sense enough to keep their mouths tight shut. Bribery and corruption were suspected but could not be proved. Sergeant Groebner and the adjutant were deaf, dumb and blind, with special emphasis on the dumbness. The blame was finally traced to the officer who had been in charge of the training company when Linton and Simonski had been transferred to the permanent staff. Since then he had died of black water fever in the Tonkin. Out of respect for his memory the case had been hushed up.

But something had to be done about the culprits. At Rillette's request they had been sent down to El Ghirza. The first thing he had done was to reduce them to the ranks; next he had censored their mail and had compelled them to return the monthly remittances sent out by their bankers. Thereafter, even before their estate had been confiscated they had been forced to live on their pay: twenty-five centimes a day.

They had shared the fate of other Legionnaires, with a few additional hardships thrown in for good measure. They came to know hunger and thirst and exhaustion; long marches beneath a flaming sun; cold nights; sand storms; the song of bullets drumming against flesh and bone; the acrid tang of burned powder; fear; and the blood-red taste of victory hard won at the bayonet point.

RILLETTE knew no mercy. For a word or a look, for an imaginary speck of dust on a belt buckle, he sentenced them to days of solitary confinement and weeks

of defaulters' drill. But they endured his nagging with the stolidity of graven images, and he was too firmly convinced of their worthlessness to change his tactics long after they had more than made amends for their past records.

Even so they were far from perfect, otherwise they would not have patronized Jelalludin's after it had been placed out of bounds. It being Sunday, they were off duty that afternoon, and after wandering about for a time in the bazaar, they had deliberately chosen that particular grog shop because they were feeling gloomy and wanted to be alone. The thought of ordering any of Jelalludin's high powered brew never entered their heads. Tea was the only drink they could buy with two sous, so they ordered tea and were glad to get it.

They were still tearing Rillette's reputation to pieces when the riot started. The low pitched hum of voices in the bazaar suddenly stopped dead. For a moment the only sound that could be heard was the slow clanging of a far off bell. Then came a single shout, high pitched, shrill, ripping the stillness asunder. It was followed by a chorus of yells, which grew louder and louder, more and more ominous.

Simonski fidgeted uneasily.

"It sounds like a riot, don't it?" he remarked. "What you think from it, Dan? Should we look at it once?"

"It ain't our funeral," declared Linton, sipping his mint tea. "Let 'em fight it out. Don't go hunting trouble, Izzy. It'll come our way soon enough."

It came sooner than they had anticipated.

Seconds later the sacking over the doorway was torn aside. A compact mass of humanity, sharply outlined against a background of brilliant sunlight, swayed on the threshold. Above the bobbing heads the splintered end of a walking stick rose and fell in swift, slashing strokes.

A stone thrown by a bare, brown arm, missed its mark, whizzed down the length of the room and struck Jelalludin's broad, fleshy nose. The impassiveness of the Arab people is no more true than any other generalization. Jelalludin let out one tremendous yell and curled up at the foot of the charcoal stove, both his hands clapped over his bleeding face.

Carefully setting their glasses aside, the Legionnaires uncurled their legs and stood up, for the situation seemed to promise some startling developments.

All at once the mass of people in the doorway broke up long enough to allow two disheveled, badly frightened women to struggle into the shop. Their clothes were torn and spattered with filth. Their hair hung down in their eyes.

A broad shouldered, portly man stood on the threshold, keeping the crowd at bay with the splintered end of the walking stick which had caught Linton's eye. The crowd pelted this lone defender with stones and hunks of dirt. His sun helmet was knocked off, disclosing a bald, pink scalp which glistened brightly in the sunshine.

The uproar was magnificent. The women screamed, Jelalludin bellowed, the man in the doorway shouted maledictions at the crowd, and the crowd roared with hate.

Linton and Simonski said nothing. The bald headed man seemed to have the situation well in hand and, as there was not room enough in the doorway for more than one man at a time, they did not attempt to interfere.

One of the women grew hysterical.

"*O mon dieu!*" she cried covering her face with her hands. "They will kill us. I know they will kill us, the savages! *O mon dieu!* This is terrible!"

The other woman, who was made of sterner stuff, plumped her down on the mud platform and shook her by the shoulders.

"They will not kill you," she said sharply. "Remember your position, madame. A white woman must not show fear. There is nothing to fear. Help will soon arrive!"

"We'll be killed!" sobbed her companion. "And it's your fault. You said it was safe. *O mon dieu!* they are going

to kill us. Armand!" she screamed at the bald headed man. "Armand! Don't let them kill you! It's her fault! She said there was no danger!"

"There is no danger," snapped the other woman. "The soldiers will be here in one minute. Control yourself, Madame de Tours. Show some courage, *voyons!*"

Simonski stepped forward impulsively.

"No danger at all, mesdames," he assured them. "Leave it to us."

Madame de Tours, at the sound of his voice, gave up the ghost and fainted. But the other lady did not faint. Her eyes, dazzled by the glare of the street, were becoming accustomed to the semi-darkness of the room. She caught sight of the uniforms.

"Brutes!" she exclaimed, clenching her fists. "Dirty brutes! Why don't you do something? Cowards!"

THEY needed no further introduction. Though she stood with her back to the light, and her face was a dark blob, they didn't have to be told that they were dealing with Madame la Capitaine Rillette.

They had no cause to love her. Arrogant, haughty, disdainful, she had no sympathy whatsoever for the men her husband led. Disappointed because he had failed to secure a staff appointment, she vented her bitterness upon the Legionnaires. In and out of barracks she never failed to report troopers who committed the slightest breach of discipline in her presence. She had to be saluted, and if the salute failed to please her the offender spent the next few days doing some intensive pack drill.

To her way of thinking—and she made no attempt to disguise her thoughts—the men who made her life secure at El Ghirza were little better than dangerous criminals over whom she had been appointed by a divine Providence to play the part of an unofficial sergeant-major.

"That's Monsieur de Tours!" she went on, pointing toward the bald headed men. "The deputy for Perpignan. Are you going to let a civilian put you to shame? Go to his help at once instead of hiding in this filthy den!"

Instead of rousing them to immediate action her order made them mulishly stubborn, and some evil genius prompted Linton to drawl:

"That's perfectly all right, madam. Those wild Indians are not dangerous. All one has to say is woof and they will of a certainty run away."

"But it all depends on how you say this woof," elaborated Simonski, not to be outdone. "We will now show madame the right kind of woof one should use under the circumstances."

"*O mon dieu!*" wailed Madame de Tours, rocking from side to side. "My poor Armand—they are killing him!"

It was for her sake, not because of Madame Rillette's objurgations, that the troopers decided the time had come for them to exert themselves.

"Drive off those beasts!" Madame Rillette called after them. "Quick! Use your bayonets!"

She was very much perturbed. The De Tours, powerful people in the world of politics, were on an official visit to the Southern Territories. One word from the deputy in the ear of the war minister would undoubtedly hasten the captain's transfer to the staff. To impress the visitors with the splendid work her husband had done, Madame Rillette had induced them to go for a walk with her through the bazaar. As a rule no escort was needed; unfortunately they had been pestered by a doddering old fool who had pursued them with demands for money. He wouldn't take no for an answer, and De Tours, growing impatient, had pushed him away with the point of his cane.

Instantly the bazaar had been in an uproar, for the old man was not only a beggar but a holy pilgrim famed for his sanctity and the potency of his curses.

The infuriated natives had shown no respect for the ladies or for the influential deputy. The troopers showed even less. Simonski caught De Tours by the coat collar and flung him out of the way. Side by side, bayonet in hand, they waded into

the crowd. It was not much of a fight. Their intervention had an immediate and subduing effect upon the natives who, unless they are well armed themselves, have a wholesome respect for the uniform of the Legion. The front ranks recoiled violently. One wild eyed creature, more frenzied than the rest, hurled himself forward in a vain attempt to dig a knife into Linton's throat. He died, spitted through the heart by the point of a slender bayonet.

That ended it. Crying aloud that death was close behind, the mob broke, pouring out of the alley as fast as it could go. A few kicks properly administered completed the rout.

Linton and Simonski hurried back to the coffee shop.

"All clear!" Linton sang out. "If you're ready, Madame la Capitaine, we'll take you back to the redout before these fellows have time to change their minds."

But the civilians refused to budge. They stayed in the shop until a picket of twenty men, led by an orderly officer, came to escort them out of the danger zone.

If Simonski and Linton expected any thanks they were doomed to disappointment. Gratitude is not one of the outstanding characteristics of the human race.

Monsieur de Tours felt doubly humiliated, first because he had been whacked by ignorant natives, second because two good-for-nothing soldiers had thrown him about like an empty sack. He expressed his indignation in a voice admirably adapted to open air campaign speeches.

When he stopped talking Madame Rillette had a few words to say. Crumpled under her arm she carried the strip of cloth she had torn off the wall above Jelalludin's charcoal stove. She was white with anger at the very notion that any one could think, let alone write, such vile things about the finest, bravest officer in the whole French army.

"Those men ought to be locked up," she told the lieutenant in charge of the picket. "This is simply odious!"

"Indeed, madame, they shall be locked up!" cried the officer after one look at the outrageous words scrawled on the cloth. "That rat run was placed out of bounds long ago."

And the culprits, hedged around with bayonets, were marched back to the redout on the hill above El Ghirza.

The next morning they appeared before Captain Rillette, who seemed to be laboring under the impression that they were directly responsible for the near riot.

"Well," he began as soon as they halted in front of the desk, "I hope you are satisfied. You have outdone yourselves, you low rascals. *This* is the limit!"

He was in an evil frame of mind. The visitors he had meant to impress were suffering from nervous prostration; his own wife had an ugly looking scratch down her right forearm which might become septic at any moment; and his reputation had suffered a disastrous setback. There was nothing he could do to counteract the bad impression De Tours was bound to have of El Ghirza.

But he could work off some of his bitter disgust on the two troopers standing in front of him. He pitched into them with right good will.

"You were found in that filthy pig sty," he went on. "The sort of place you *would* chose! You're hopeless, you swine. I knew it from the day I set eyes on you. Hopeless!"

It did not occur to him that they deserved any thanks for having protected his wife and his guests. Madame Rillette had made it clear that all the credit really belonged to Monsieur de Tours, an opinion which the gentleman in question had not attempted to correct.

"And as to this scurrilous sign," added the captain, picking up with the tips of his fingers the rag which had been produced as evidence, "it is beneath my notice. A cow, am I? And you advocate violence as a means of getting rid of me, do you? You blackguards—"

"But, *mon Capitaine*," protested Simonski, "we didn't have a thing to do

with putting up that sign."

"Be still! I never said you had anything to do with it, damn you. Don't accuse me of twisting the evidence. The fact that you didn't tear the thing down is proof enough of your sentiments. I have been lenient, tolerant, humane—but I'm through trying to make good soldiers out you. I'm going to show you how *I* deal with hard cases. You'll do ninety days with the special section, and if that doesn't cure you I'll send you straight up before a general court-martial."

"Hey! Ninety days!" exclaimed Simonski, all at once losing his mask of indifference. "But we've only got another fifty!"

"Shut your damn mouth!" roared the sergeant-major, driving the toe of his boot against the culprit's ankle.

"Ninety *and* fifty." Rillette smiled. "That'll do. March them away, Sergeant-Major."

VI

THE SPECIAL section was a peculiar institution. Rillette had created it for the express purpose of subduing unruly troopers whose offences were not serious enough to warrant court-martial action, but who needed something more drastic in the way of punishment than could be meted out to them at El Ghirza.

It was cheaper and easier to send a wrongdoer to the special section than to bundle him back to headquarters for trial. And the garrison records made a much better showing.

Ostensibly the section was a labor unit, cruising about in the desert building culverts and leveling roads. In reality it was a grim hell presided over by a horse faced, yellow fanged adjutant by the name of Cartellini. To guard the Legionnaires at work on the road he assigned a platoon of coal-black Senegalese Tirailleurs, who could be relied upon to carry out their orders to the letter.

Their orders were simple: shoot and shoot to kill at the first hint of insubordination on the part of a prisoner.

Adjutant Cartellini prided himself on his ability to reform the worst offenders and make them as tame as sheep—or roll them into their graves. Out in the desert, efficiently supported by the Tirailleurs, he could devise novel methods of punishment which might not have met with the approval of soft hearted officers. Rillette could not have picked a better man for the job.

Linton and Simonski reached the camp at the end of a forty kilometer hike across a naked, sun blasted plain. They were blear eyed and weary, bowed down beneath the weight of their topheavy packs. From head to foot they were caked with fine white dust, and their throats were so dry they could barely speak.

Standing beneath the awning outside his tent, Cartellini looked them over, cocking his head first on one side, then on the other.

"One hundred and forty days," he commented. "We'll have plenty of time to drill some sense into your noodles, eh, my boys? You know the rules, I hope and pray. Nothing complicated about them. Behave yourselves and you'll leave here bright and early the day your time expires. But don't try any of your little pranks while you're with Papa Cartellini. He doesn't like pranks. Every time he has to reprimand you that's one more day you can tack on your sentences. You see what I mean, I hope and pray?"

The question did not seem to call for an answer. Cartellini waited for a second or so, gnawing at his lower lip with his crumbling, yellow teeth.

Without warning he stepped forward and sent his fist crashing into Linton's face.

"Have you lost your tongue?" he demanded. "I don't tolerate such surly manners, you hunk of filth! I expect my men to be brisk and cheerful. Always cheerful, d'you hear?"

Again his fist shot out, rattling against Linton's jaw. Linton's knees sagged. Blood poured out of the corners of his mouth. He made a desperate effort to

brace himself, straining every aching muscle to keep from toppling over.

"Come on, speak up!" jeered Cartellini, "When I do you the honor of addressing you the least I expect is a civil answer."

They were in no mood to appreciate his particular brand of humor. The injustice of the sentence inflicted upon them by Rillette had aroused every lawless, dangerous instinct they possessed. They were through with good behavior, altogether through, and they were ready to run any risk, no matter how great, rather than face the certainty of slow death at the hands of Cartellini.

Linton spat out a mouthful of dust and blood.

"What the hell do you want me to say?" he retorted. "Do you want me to lick your boots?"

"Certainly, since you are thoughtful enough to mention it." Cartellini laughed. "I'm always open to suggestions. Get down on your knees, *salopard*, and do it. No? You won't? You louse, I'll make you sorry you were ever born!"

Before he could strike another blow Linton stumbled toward him. Hampered by his pack, weakened by the long march, he was no match for the long armed adjutant. The latter caught him by the throat, digging blunt fingers into his neck, squeezing until his swollen tongue lolled out of his mouth and his face turned black.

When Cartellini loosened his grip Linton collapsed, falling forward flat to the ground.

Two Senegalese guards had caught hold of Simonski before he could interfere. The adjutant turned toward him.

"And as for you," he remarked, "I don't like the shape of your nose. We'll have to fix it."

Simonski winced, much to Cartellini's amusement.

"What's worrying you?" he inquired, opening his eyes very wide. "*Mon dieu!* You're not afraid of your Papa Cartellini, are you?"

"No, I'm not," Simonski assured him. "But I don't want to be hit while these black devils are holding my arms, if that's what you mean."

"Too bad you don't like my Tirailleurs," chuckled the adjutant. "Why, without them I should have had my throat cut long ago—and that would be a calamity. The whole army would mourn poor old Papa Cartellini."

"*Vache!*" Simonski spat at him, his voice shrill with the agony of suspense. "That's just what your throat needs—cutting."

"But it'll take a better man than you to do it," jeered the adjutant.

He beckoned to the corporal of Tirailleurs who was standing behind the prisoners.

"Samba, that's a bad fellow. Hammer him a bit. Soften him up."

Grinning from ear to ear, the corporal slung the butt end of his gun against the small of Simonski's back. The blow wrenched a shout of pain from his lips; two more finished him. He toppled over sidewise, but the Tirailleur went on pounding him until told to stop.

And that was only the beginning.

DURING the following weeks Linton and Simonski suffered as they had never suffered before.

Surrounded by thick barbed wire entanglements, the camp lay at the base of an outcrop of red rock jutting like an island above the floor of the plain. A second belt of wire divided the camp into two unequal areas. On one side stood the three patched, lopsided bell tents occupied by the Special Section, twenty-two men in all; on the other stood Cartellini's marquee and the pup tents of the Tirailleurs.

A spring dribbling out of a fissure in the wall of rock supplied enough water for cooking and drinking purposes. Washing was forbidden except when Cartellini felt the need of a bath. He never touched water at any other time, keeping for his own use the wine rations of the twenty-two *salopards* who did his bidding.

By day, stripped to the waist, sweating

beneath a murderous sun, they quarried stone out of the flank of the hill under the watchful eye of the Tirailleurs. Half starved, undermined by dysentery, driven frantic by the hordes of vermin which infested the camp, they toiled from dawn till dusk. If they faltered, if they paused to wipe the perspiration from their eyes there was always a Senegalese close at hand to kick them back to work.

At night Cartellini chained them by the ankle to the center poles of the tents. As an added protection a machine gun, mounted on the rampart erected inside the Tirailleurs' compound, was placed in position to enfilade the Legionnaires' camp at the first sign of disorder.

The filth in those tents was hair raising. They were never swept or cleaned. The men slept fully dressed, and the stench from their own lousy rags gagged them when, after dark, the adjutant made fast the flaps and locked them in their superheated canvas prisons. If they moved about too much, disturbing him with the rattle of their ankle chains, he sent his orderly to restore order with a length of knotted rope.

The food was worse than abominable. In the morning before going to work they had "juice" and stale bread full of weevils. The juice was made from the boiled over grounds of the Tirailleurs' coffee. At eleven o'clock they ate their dinner at the quarry, squatting like wild beasts in holes they had scooped out of the rock to shield themselves, if only for a little while, from the full blast of the sun. The dinner never varied: *rata*, a gray, greasy soup in which bits of spoiled meat, potato, and occasionally a stray vegetable floated about. Each man filled his water bottle before leaving camp; unless he drank sparingly he was out of luck. In the evening there was another issue of juice and bread. Half an hour afterward the tent flaps were closed for the night.

Captain Rillette visited the camp once every ten days or so. As soon as the lookout posted on the topmost point of the knoll signaled his approach (he came rocketing down the track the Legionnaires had laid at eighty miles an hour in a low-slung sports car) the prisoners formed up in two ranks with the Tirailleurs posted behind them.

The procedure never varied much. The captain, sometimes accompanied by his wife, did not get out of the car.

Cartellini, after he had made his report, would bellow at the troopers:

"Any complaints? The captain is willing to listen to all those who wish to make a complaint. Complainants, two steps forward—march!"

And the ranks always stood fast. Any man foolhardy enough to voice a protest was signing his own death warrant.

"That's splendid!" Rillette would exclaim. "Excellent! The morale is good, I see. Legionnaires, may this experience be a warning to you when you return to duty! We must have discipline, we must have obedience. The sooner you acquire these virtues the sooner you will be a credit to your regiment." Here he placed his foot on the starter. "Anything else, *Monsieur l'Adjutant*?"

"Not another thing, *mon Capitaine*. Everything is going along smoothly . . ."

And the car shot away in a smother of dust.

Any other sign of life in that arid wilderness of sand and stone was always suspicious. The camp was far away from the caravan routes, and the possibility of an attack by some marauding band was an ever present menace. At the first hint of danger the Legionnaires were hustled back to camp and chained up. The Tirailleurs went to their battle posts and life stood still until Cartellini had assured himself that all danger was past.

The greatest threat that overshadowed the lives of the prisoners came not from the presence of any rebel *harka* in the vicinity, but from Cartellini. He punished them with savage cruelty, breaking them body and soul, taking a grim delight in their sufferings. Short of mutiny, sickness was one of the worst offences a man could commit. When a trooper failed to report for duty Cartellini had him bound hand and foot and thrashed

his bare back with a fistful of cactus leaves; so many strokes for dysentery, so many for fever, so many more for undiagnosed diseases. Afterward he was given a sun bath, with his torn back exposed to the ants and the flies, until he forgot his sickness and condescended to go back to work.

Most of the prisoners were too apathetic to care what their ultimate fate might be. They were empty shells drained of all feeling and passion and hope, living because they could not die, envying those who did drop in their tracks never to get up again.

BUT LINTON refused to submit. He faced his tormentor without fear, hating him with a cold, intent hatred which became an obsession. He could think of nothing else. Awake or asleep he was haunted by distorted visions of the adjutant's leering, yellow toothed face. In the middle of the night he would wake up, snarling, with his fingers clamped on a shadowy throat.

"I'll get him," he told Simonski. "I'll get him if it takes twenty years."

"If I had a rod," agreed Simonski, his teeth clacking with fever, "I'd plug him. But what's the good of it? It wouldn't get you nowhere. Not with the Tirailleurs standing by to shoot you down. We'll be buried here anyway . . ."

"I'll get the whole gang before I'm through," raved Linton. "Every damn one of them. Don't let it throw you, Izzy. Hang on! It's a tough ball game, but if I get just one chance I'll show 'em where they get off."

Cooped up in the stinking tent, in the quarry, on the road, anywhere and everywhere he could talk of nothing else. By degrees the astonishing truth gained ground in other men's mind; the Yankee really meant what he said. It was as if a gust of fresh air had fanned to life the last spark of hope in the troopers' hearts.

"Linton," ran the stiff lipped whisper. "Watch him! He's got it all doped out. He'll get Cartellini one of these days . . ."

And the idea spread until the whole section stood behind Linton, straining and waiting for the time to come when they would smash their way to freedom.

"Even supposing we do wipe them out," grunted a bullet headed German. "What good is that going to do us? We can't get away."

"Who wants to get away?" Linton retorted. "How many leave here when their sentences expire? You? You poor mutt, you've served three sentences already. You're not wanted at El Ghirza. This is where you'll croak; you and me and Simonski and half the others. But Cartellini is going to go ahead of me, that's all I know, and I don't give a damn what happens afterward."

A hundred schemes were discussed and abandoned. There were too many obstacles to surmount, too many rifles to face, too many risks to run. Cartellini had been in command of the section too long not to know every dodge and to forestall every plan. His system of supervision was almost foolproof. Almost —but not quite.

The explosion occurred without any prearranged plans having been made—spontaneously—before the Legionnaires realized that their time had come.

It was a day of strong winds and white, glaring sunlight. Clouds of sand swept up against the face of the quarry, stinging and blinding the men at their work. The air, laden with fine particles of dust, was unbreathable. Less than half an hour after work began a trooper dropped his pick, carried his hands to his throat and pitched headlong to the ground. A Tirailleur kicked him conscientiously, but he kicked in vain. The man refused to move for the good reason that he was dead.

Cartellini ordered the corpse dumped by the roadside.

"It's a good day for funerals," he explained. "We might as well wait and see if there aren't any more candidates for the pearly gates before we start digging any graves. Get back on the job!"

he thundered at the Legionnaires. "You louse, haven't you ever seen a hunk of cold meat before? *Au boulot!* Work!"

Minutes later another man went down—Simonski. Linton, kneeling beside him, doused the lining of his *képi* with water. The bottle was kicked from his hands. Looking up, he saw Cartellini bending over him.

"Let him croak if he wants to!" barked the adjutant. "What business of yours is it? Species of a rat-faced spittle skin, who told you to play the Good Samaritan? You'll do ten days overtime for this." He pressed the muzzle of his revolver against the nape of Linton's neck. "And don't think I'm not wise to your tricks, *salopard*. I'm on to every one of them. One false move, you swine of an American, and I'll feed you to the jackals. Now then, get up and dig into it. Up!"

Linton got up. He spat in his hands and took a firm grip on the shaft of his pick. He moved one step forward, then swiftly he spun around, raising the pick high above his head. A tongue of flame leaped from the revolver muzzle, scorching his neck. Before Cartellini could fire again the point of the pick shattered his skull. Linton snatched up the revolver. A Tirailleur fired from the hip. Shot answered shot. The Tirailleur doubled up. Some one grabbed his rifle before it reached the ground.

The quarry, in an instant, became a bedlam full of half naked, yelling men surging hither and yon among the rocks, groping through the dun colored dust haze for a glimpse of the red fezes of the Tirailleurs. One of them, kneeling behind a boulder, fired five shots, brought down five men. Before he could reload he was overpowered and hacked to pieces.

A machine gun stationed at the mouth of the quarry jarred into action. But the gunner's aim was poor. Before he could bring his weapon to bear on the mutineers Linton crawled in close and shot him through the head. As he pitched over, the three other members of the gun crew broke and fled down the road toward the camp, galloping over the hard ground in long, loose jointed strides, heads thrown back, arms flaying the air.

A group of wild eyed Legionnaires slung the gun around. One of them hunkered down, squinting over the sights. The others stood by, chuckling at the ludicrous appearance of the three bounding Senegalese.

The gun coughed, spluttered, coughed again. Bullets kicked up little spurts of sand a few yards behind the pounding heels.

THE Tirailleurs swerved, dodged, ducked—the stream of lead crept up on them. One man threw up his hands, bent over backward as the bullets drummed into his spine—bent over still farther, and all at once crumpled up, broken in two.

"That's the baby who broke Gaillon's jaw," commented an onlooker. "Good work, Emil. Keep it up."

A long burst of fire answered him. The last of the gun crew went down, squirming in the dust.

A black sergeant rallied the demoralized Tirailleurs, gathering up every man he could find in and around the camp. But he made the fatal mistake of coming out from behind the barbed wire to carry the fight to the mutineers. By that time there was no stopping the Legionnaires. Fifteen of them met the Senegalese machetes with picks and shovels, bayonets and rifles.

During the next sixty seconds the scuffle degenerated into a furious, bloody dogfight. The Tirailleurs fought to save their hides; the Legionnaires to wipe out the sufferings and insults their jailers had inflicted upon them week after week, month after month. All the crazy passions stored up in their hearts boiled over during that one swift and terrible minute.

They tore into the Tirailleurs with a reckless disregard for their own safety which smothered all resistance. When the black sergeant dropped the fight came to an abrupt end. The Tirailleurs

scattered, throwing away their rifles and cutlasses in their frantic haste to get away. In twos and threes the Legionnaires chased them all up and over and around the knoll.

At long intervals a few shots rang out —one here, one there. Finally, for want of a living target, they ceased altogether and a breathless stillness settled over the hillock.

Linton carried Simonski back to camp and put him on the cot in Cartellini's marquee. For want of water he soaked the unconscious trooper's head with white wine.

Simonski opened his eyes. He licked his sticky lips. His first words, spoken in a hoarse whisper, were:

"Vat's the use of vasting it, eh? Put the bottle in my mouth once. Vat has happened, Dan? You look scared."

"I am," confessed Linton. "We done it."

Simonski looked blank.

"Fixed their feet," Linton explained. "Cartellini and the black boys. They're out. Finished. I told you I'd get him."

"And I missed it! I'd have given a million dollars to be in on it." He was so weak and sick that tears dribbled down his filthy cheeks into his unkempt beard. "What for didn't you tell me you was pulling something off once?"

"You started it," grunted Linton, pouring himself a mugful of white wine. "If you hadn't flopped we'd still be pecking stones out of the damn quarry. But you got lots of time, Izzy. You and me and the rest of the gang, we're headed for just one thing and that's trouble."

Simonski shook his head.

Other troopers were drifting in. Of the original twenty-two, thirteen trudged back to camp. There was no cheering. They were clear headed enough now to realize the enormity of their crime. They had mutinied. The penalty for mutiny was death.

Escape was out of the question. The desert hemmed them in more completely than iron bars could have done. Every known oasis was under military guard. Off the beaten track they would be sure to die of thirst or else blunder into an enemy *djich* which would make cat meat of them.

For the present they were content to sit tight, forget the future and drink up the adjutant's stock of white wine. Which they did. In a very short space of time (for they had not had a square meal for many days) the wine went to their heads.

Tongues began to wag. They were all talking and laughing at once when another trooper—a Russian with a broad, flat featured face riddled with pockmarks —squeezed into the tent.

He was given a tremendous ovation. An old tin can brimful of wine was thrust into his hand.

"One more, thank the *bon dieu!*" cried Linton. "Fourteen of us now. That's a good sign."

"If you believe in signs," rejoined Simonski. "Myself, I ain't superstitious, but—" he pressed one hand to his forehead—"I'm going to be sick. Oy, what a life!"

The Russian was motioning for silence with a downward gesture of his hands.

"I was on top of the knoll," he explained in a slow, sing-song voice. "I thought about the lookout man so I went up and shot him."

"*Ce vieux Barinovich!*" shouted the inebriates. "The most thoughtful man in the regiment. Have a drink! There's plenty more in the cask."

The Russian threw back his head, opened wide his mouth and poured the contents of the can down his throat at one gulp.

"That tastes good," he went on, sucking the wine drops out of his mustache. "But I was forgetting, I want to tell you something. There is a car coming up the road. It looks to me like the captain's car. It's moving fast."

The laughter died away. A gust of wind made the tent wall rattle noisily.

A gray bearded Legionnaire with a blue dragon tattooed on his emaciated chest, picked up a rifle and snapped the breech bolt open.

"If it's Rillette—" he began.

"Listen!" ordered his neighbor.

The faraway hum of an engine beat against their ears.

"Dear old Rillette!" sighed the gray bearded Legionnaire, thumbing a handful of cartridges into the magazine of his rifle. "Now we're going to have a little fun."

The drone grew louder. It made the tent vibrate like a drum. Fourteen men burst out of the marquee, ripping the canvas walls aside in their haste.

"Shoot at the tires," cautioned Simonski, cramming the adjutant's sun helmet down over his ears. "We'll court-martial him according to law. Get him alive."

The car was not traveling as fast as usual. It was still a mile or more away when the Legionnaires reached the breastworks inside the wire.

"We forgot those *machabés* lying in the middle of the road," Linton exclaimed angrily. "Too late to dump 'em out of sight now. Get him before he has time to find out something's wrong. Don't try sniping. A volley'll do the trick. What the hell's wrong with that bus; it's crawling like a hearse. Section!" he barked, giving a good imitation of the adjutant's rasping voice. "Pre-pare for salvo fire! Sights at zero. Target the aluminum hub caps. Ready—"

HE PEERED over the breastworks. The car, a hundred yards away, looked queerly lopsided. It wobbled and lurched from one side of the road to the other.

"*La carne!*" Linton cursed. "He's brought his jane along with him. Aim low. All set? Fire!"

There was a single, shattering detonation. Wisps of blue smoke eddied above the rampart. Tight jawed and intent, the Legionnaires peered at their handiwork. As the bullets tore into it, the car swerved drunkenly. The right rear wheel, ripped from the axle, shot off at a tangent, bouncing high in the air.

In a smother of dust, grinding and ripping itself to pieces, the car slewed around, stopped and very slowly turned over on its side. Out of the shroud of flying sand leaped a long shaft of smoke tipped flame.

Half a dozen men ran toward the wreck and dragged Captain Rillette and his wife away from the scorching heat of the fire which was making junk of a high priced racing car.

They had not suffered any physical injuries, but they were very hot, bothered and indignant.

Deafened by the roar of the engine, they were uncertain whether or not they had been fired upon. There was something undeniably suspicious about the ragged, hairy, barefooted crew which confronted them.

"What's this?" spluttered Rillette, glaring at the guns the Legionnaires carried. "Where did those rifles come from? Where is the adjutant? Where—"

Linton cut him short.

"Cartellini is dead, and you, *Monsieur le Capitaine*, you are under arrest."

The whole appalling truth burst upon Rillette. He turned chalk-white as his glance went from the Legionnaires to his wife. There was a lean, hungry look in the troopers' eyes which made him feel sick.

"Look out!" he cried wildly. "Louise, *ma pauvre chèrie*, they have mutinied!"

As he tried to reach her side four rifles dug him in the pit of the stomach.

"She's safe," Linton told him. "Nobody's going to touch her."

"Leave her alone!" cried Rillette, though not one of the Legionnaires showed any signs of wanting to molest his wife. "You filthy beasts! You swine! Don't lay your foul hands on her. Attacking women; that's just what you would do!" His anger gave way to bitter anguish. "For the love of God," he pleaded, "put a bullet through her heart. If there's a single spark of decency in you, don't—"

"Decency!" jeered Linton. "You've done your best to stamp it out of us. Decency be damned. We're everything you

ever called us; we're a bunch of cheap thugs, gunmen, beasts and swine—but we don't shoot women."

A startled exclamation burst from her lips.

"That's one of the men who—"

"And there's the other one," added Linton, pointing toward Simonski crushed beneath the adjutant's sun helmet. "Changed, haven't we? We need delousing and we need a doctor. I know it. If our appearance doesn't suit you you can blame it on monsieur your husband. You didn't know you were married to a torturer? I'm sorry to say you are."

"I should have had you shot!" stormed Rillette.

"Forget that stuff. Did you think we were going to let you and Cartellini kill us off piecemeal? That's what you have been trying to do. We've had enough of it. We've quit. Now comes your turn."

"Louise," cried the distraught officer, whose mind ran along a single track, "make them shoot you!"

"Madame, we are going to do nothing of the sort," Linton assured her. "You're a damn sight safer with us than you would be in the El Ghirza bazaar. But I can't say as much of your husband. He's going to be court-martialed. You can listen to the evidence if you want to. If he is found guilty he will be sentenced, and the sentence will be duly carried out."

She did her best to be brave, but her lips twitched.

"You mean—"

"What I say."

Abruptly, without any apparent reason, the lady began to laugh. She stood in the midst of a sun blasted landscape, at the mercy of a gang of brutal cutthroats who were preparing to murder her husband, and laughed—laughed until the tears rolled down her cheeks.

Startled by this wholly unforeseen development, the Legionnaires stared at her uneasily.

"God knows what you're laughing at," objected Linton. "I don't see anything funny about any of this."

"Of course you don't." She gulped. "You don't begin to understand how funny it really is. In another minute I'm going to have hysterics."

"The place for you is indoors—out of the sun."

"Don't make it worse," she pleaded. "Listen, all of you, before it's too late. René," she appealed to her husband, "you tell them. Don't stand there foaming at the mouth. They're not going to harm me. Tell them!"

"It's nothing," volunteered the Russian with the pockmarked face. "Let's get on with the court-martial. I'm a star witness, I am."

"Wait!" urged Simonski, who had a tight grip on the captain's right arm. "Let him tell what he knows. It can't do any harm to let him shoot off his mouth."

Rillette cleared his throat.

"In about two hours," he announced in a hoarse voice, "this camp is almost certain to be attacked."

"And that makes a good story," some one jeered.

"It happens to be the truth. We were ambushed as we came over the culvert at Kilometer 19. We were fired upon by a *djich* of at least a hundred and fifty men, hiding in the gully, waiting for us. They blew out three of my tires."

"So that's why you were making such poor time," commented Linton after a thoughtful pause.

"Exactly. I couldn't turn back. I had to drive straight on. The *djich* is following as fast as it can travel. I thought—I hoped Madame Rillette would find a shelter in this camp among men who would be proud to protect her."

A gust of laughter greeted his words.

"Yeah, proud of being half starved and kicked and chained up at night," retorted Linton. "You can cut out that bunk. We'll fight for our own skins if we have to—just as we fought the Tirailleurs. And where's your proof the *djich* will trail you all the way? How do we know—"

"Because you are not the only ones who want to have me butchered," Rillette said bitterly. "That confounded beggar who started the riot in the bazaar has been

stirring up trouble."

"That's what makes it so very amusing," added his wife. "All this talk about court-martials and my safety and so on, and in a little while we're going to be wiped out—every one of us."

"I'd like to see a *djich* wipe us out." Linton chuckled. "The Tirailleurs couldn't do it when we were unarmed. No flock of wild Arabs can do it either. Let's see what's happening."

HE HURRIED away, circling around the burning car until he had an unobstructed view of the plain.

"They're coming right enough," he admitted when he returned. "A raft of 'em by the looks of the dust they're kicking up. That sort of changes things. There's no time for a regular court-martial. Not now, anyway. You're a swine, Rillette, I'm telling you straight, but if the rest of the gang don't object I'm willing to let you fight for your woman."

"Put a bullet through his nut!" urged the gray bearded trooper with the dragon tattooed on his chest.

He raised his rifle to his shoulder, but Linton knocked the weapon from his hands.

"You're not alone," he said sharply. "Think it over. If the *djich* means business we're going to need every man we can muster."

"And afterward—what'll happen then even if we do scrape through? We haven't a chance."

"We didn't have a chance from the very beginning. We're ditched. You ought to know that. Let this bird protect his wife. If he don't stop a bullet we can fix his feet when the show's over. Any objections?"

There were none.

"Does that suit you?" Linton inquired, turning toward Rillette. "Are you willing to forget those stripes on your cuff and shoulder a rifle like everybody else?"

Rillette was silent for a long moment. His face was gray and drawn. Suddenly, reaching a decision, he looked straight at the Legionnaires.

"I am willing to do more than that," he said slowly. "You are putting me to shame. I never knew how bad conditions were in this camp. I have been blind. For what it is worth I give you my word of honor; if we get out of here alive no further mention will ever be made of the—the mutiny and the camp will be broken up."

"How about Cartellini and the Tirailleurs?" inquired the man called Barinovich. "I don't trust you."

"I gave you my word of honor," snapped Rillette. "You have spared my life that I might defend my wife. I offer you a full pardon that you may defend your honor." He swept aside the rifles pressed against his chest. "I mean what I say. If you don't trust me, shoot."

In two strides he reached his wife's side and caught her in his arms. Not a shot rang out.

The court-martial disbanded.

"Say," pondered Simonski while they were ripping the lid off a box of machine gun ammunition, "why didn't we shoot him, can you tell me that? We must be simple."

"Stampeded," explained Linton. "That jane did it. I couldn't plug Rillette with her looking on. To hell with all women! You can't call your soul your own with one of 'em hanging around your neck!"

The *djich* was less than half a mile away. It came on at a slow jog trot, riding knee to knee—a blurred mass of men and horses, of tossing manes and flapping *burnouses*. The sun slithered and flashed on burnished gun barrels.

Crack! A shot rang out above the thunder of the hoofs. A bullet sang by overhead. While the main body of horsemen wheeled about the camp hunting for a weak spot in the defenses, snipers kept up a desultory fire against the rampart.

The Legionnaires waited for the rush without any unnecessary display of emotion. They were back on the job again; their job; war.

"This ain't nothing," commented Simonski, watching the *djich* break into a

hand gallop. "From the way he talked I thought there was a couple of thousand of 'em. A couple of hundred 'd be nearer the mark."

There were fourteen Legionnaires.

"It's a cinch," agreed Linton, settling himself on the iron seat behind the machine gun. "Say, Izzy, it feels good to handle one of these babies again. Look at the way those Senegalese cared for it, will you? It's all gummed up." He ran his thumb nail along the underside of the casing. "See that—plain dirt. Those black boys ought to have been court—"

A long drawn roar drowned him out as the *djich*, knowing nothing about barbed wire, hurled itself upon the camp.

One Legionnaire let drive, then another; both machine guns roared into action. The center of the oncoming mass collapsed, reformed, came on again. Two hundred yards—one hundred . . . A gap appeared in the right wing. In its wake, squirming in the dust, it left a tangle of men and horses. Then the right wing melted completely away, ripped to pieces and smashed. The others faltered, swerved—and came on again, led by a black bearded warrior mounted on a piebald stallion whose bit was coated with foam.

Barinovich went down, sprawling in the hot white sand. Another man crumpled up, drilled through the neck.

Fifty yards—twenty—ten . . . A living torrent struck the wire—and stopped. It was magnificent but useless. At point-blank range as the horses piled up the machine guns swept the heaving, kicking mass into oblivion.

A rider, in one fantastic jump, using his own dead as a running board, hurtled over the wire and the rampart and landed inside the camp. He cut one trooper's head off his shoulders and spitted a second one on the point of his sword before Rillette dragged him out of the saddle and killed him with his bare hands.

The machine guns roared on, beating down the raiders with a sleet of lead. Twice the *djich* returned to the attack—twice it piled up on the wire. The survivors drew away and the dust swallowed them up.

Linton eased the pressure on the thumb pieces. The gun slowed down, sputtered—stopped. He worked his cramped fingers, making the knuckles crack.

"Well, sir, I guess that lets us out," he croaked. He peered through the haze of dust and smoke at Rillette, who was squatting on the rampart, taking pot shots at the retreating Arabs. "If that guy really means what he says we're sitting pretty, d'you know that?"

"Myself, I'm from Missouri," Simonski declared. "You know somethings, Dan? I could do with a drink. It's been a heavy day."

VII

THEY were standing outside the orderly room, in the courtyard of the regimental depot at Sidi-bel-Abbes. The early morning sunlight slanting over the rooftops had turned the drab yellow walls to glowing gold. The air was light and clear and sparkling. A woolly white cloud faintly tinged with pink sailed across the sky. An orderly, carrying a can full of hot coffee, sauntered across the courtyard toward Block D.

Linton shifted his weight uneasily from one foot to the other.

"These damn shoes," he complained. "Wouldn't you know they'd issue you with something two sizes too small!"

"Might think we was broke," agreed Simonski, fingering a cap made out of the cheapest shoddy. "And they give me *this* to wear. A nice way they have of treating time-expired men!"

They were dressed in the civilian clothes they had received at the clothing store—corduroy trousers, red sashes and amazing coats that fitted nowhere, not even where they touched.

After awhile the door of the orderly room opened and Sergeant Groebner, redder and stouter than ever, clumped down the whitewashed steps.

"So—" he grinned—"you are on your way. Here's the tickets and the five francs." He shook their hands. "Sorry to see you go; we had good reports about

you from El Ghirza. I did my best for you, don't forget. Still, rich boys like you, you got something to look forward to. *Ja!* Well, goodby."

They trudged out of barracks, and turned down the Avenue de la République, heading toward the station. They dragged along at a snail's pace.

"Did you get that?" Linton grumbled. "Rich, he called us! That's all he knows about it. A hell of a lot we got to look forward to. Not a red cent in the bank and a bunch of lousy bums hanging around, waiting to bump us off."

Simonski put his hands in his pockets—and snatched them out again hastily.

"I know," he sighed. "Oy, we ain't never going to find peace and quiet nowhere! It's just more troubles no matter where you turn."

Linton looked back over his shoulder at the barrack buildings.

"Come to think of it, Izzy, we ain't had such a bad time. Did we show that bird Rillette where he got off? I'll say we did! They can't put anything over on us, not even in the Legion. No, sir! And what the hell! I don't feel right in civilian clothes—sort of sloppy and half dressed."

"Even the pockets is all wrong," agreed Simonski.

Crawling along, they came to the corner of the Avenue and the Rue Gambette. They stared up at the clock on the front of the Café Continental.

"One hour and twenty minutes before train time!" exclaimed Linton. "That's the way they do things in the army, when they're through with you. They kick you out—nowhere to go, nothing to do. Everything is closed up tight at this hour of the morning. Say, let's walk back a ways and look the old dump over. We can kid the ears off the orderly sergeant; that'll be something to do."

Simonski's dark eyes began to twinkle.

"That's an idea!" He chuckled. "He can't do anything to us now, either. We're civilians, that's some consolation."

They swung around and retraced their steps. They walked faster and faster. When they reached the barrack gates they were almost running.

"Back again!" cried the orderly sergeant, who was sitting on the bench outside the guardhouse, drinking his morning coffee. "Forgotten something?"

"It's this way, *mon Sergent,*" began Linton, "the train doesn't leave for an hour or so . . ."

"What of it?"

"Well, you see, we don't know what to do with ourselves, so we thought we'd come—"

"You thought you'd come back here and make a few wisecracks just to pass the time away. Is that it?" The sergeant put the mug down on the bench and stood up. "That's been tried before," he pointed out. "Go on, start something. I'm waiting."

"But, *mon Sergent,*" Simonski said hastily, "we don't want to start anything. No! No!"

"Then clear out quick, you lousy specimens of civilians, before I heave you into the gutter. *Allez!*"

They stood their ground.

"You don't understand," Linton protested. "The point is, *mon Sergent,* we don't like it outside. That's right, isn't it, Simonski? All things considered, it's too risky, too uncertain."

"*Mon dieu!*" gulped the sergeant.

"That's it, *mon Sergent!*" cried Simonski. "We made a mistake. We want to sign on again."

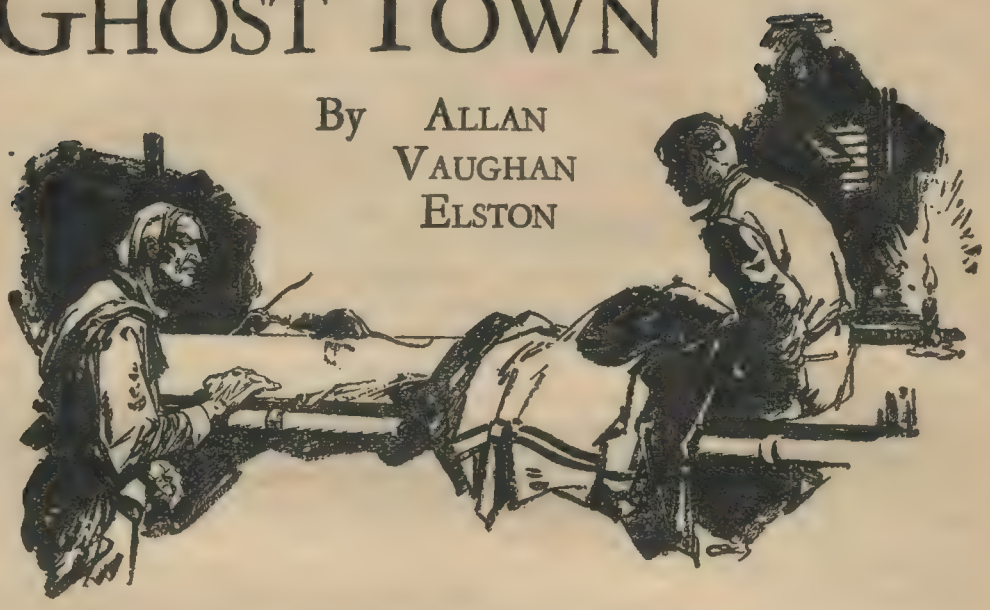
"Imbeciles!" snorted the sergeant. "Hyenas! You put us to the trouble of discharging you—of giving you new suits of clothes, new boots, everything—and you find out when it's all over that you've made a mistake! Cretins! Why the devil didn't you think of it sooner? Get in there, the pair of you, and report to Sergeant Groebner, and I hope he hands you ten days' cells for having made a monkey out of him!"

They marched briskly across the courtyard toward the orderly room.

"Ain't it grand?" Linton chuckled. "Ain't it swell to be talked to like that again? It certainly makes you feel at home!"

GHOST TOWN

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON



Author of "Whispering Rails"

THE town of Smeed lay grotesque and weirdly desolate in the dusk, its crumbling walls resembling gray specters. Its shapes and shadows startled Everett Gregg. A roof of black cloud hung low, spanning the canyon from timberline to timberline, and beneath it those skeletons of stone and iron loomed in strangely forbidding ranks. A smokestack arose crazily from the ruins of a forsaken smelter. A derrick, from whose cross-arm swung a rustling cable, gave against the oncoming night the fleeting impression of a gibbet. The streets of the town were deserted, and had been, Gregg knew, for twenty-five years.

He knew that much because Ed Patterson, at Fair Play, had informed him:

"On the way up to Soupdish Pass, young fella, you'll go through Smeed. They ain't nobody there. Smeed died with its boots on 'bout the year you was born."

Thunder now rolled out of the black cloud. Rain was due, and plenty of it. It meant, Gregg decided, that he'd have to make camp here in the deserted town.

He eyed the prospect with small relish. Most of the roofs were caved in; but he noted one square two-story structure of limestone rock which seemed to offer ample shelter. Winds had blown the doors from it, and most of the window glass was smashed by hailstones; nevertheless it should provide a sanctuary for the night.

After watering his saddlehorse and pack mare at the creek, Gregg tethered them. Then, lugging his bedroll through the gloom, he approached the chosen structure. At its doorless entrance he stopped with a presentiment that rats, reptiles or worse might infest the dark room.

A zigzag flash and the groan of a riven pine on the slope above him decided Gregg. Rain was already beginning to strike him in cold, fat drops. Pushing his bedroll through that black portal, Gregg stumbled in after it. A minute later he was shining his pocket flash

down the length of a thirty-foot mahogany bar.

These quarters, he saw, were the old saloon of the boom days of Smeed. Although the small fixtures had been stripped away by vandals, the bar was still in place. In spite of age and scars, Gregg noted that it had once been more than commonly handsome. A score of thirsty muckers might have breasted it. Beyond was a marble-topped back-bar, and above it a massive mirror. These ornate relics recalled to Gregg certain facts mentioned by Patterson at Fair Play. Smeed in the old days, it seemed, was a one-mine camp. Samuel Smeed, better known as Silver Sam, owned and developed both mine and town. He was lavish with his funds, and with them had erected every stick and stone of the town.

"The best," according to Patterson, "was only half good enough for Silver Sam. Money came his way easy, and he spent it like water."

That, Gregg thought, would explain a rich mahogany bar.

Cobwebs in stringy festoons dripped from the ceiling. Inches of dust, presumably blown through the entrance, covered the floor. On it lay an old playing card. Gregg picked it up; it was so faded that he could barely recognize the jack of spades.

The customers' floor space was, the intruder judged, about forty feet long by half as wide. At the rear a sagging stairway ascended to the upper floor.

Everett Gregg unrolled his blankets. Then, after a minute of indecision, he made his bed squarely atop the bar. By that means he hoped to keep pack rats from galloping back and forth over his recumbent form through the night. Next he produced a candle from his kit, lighted it and stood it in its grease on the bar. He went to the door and peered out; it was raining briskly now. He came back disconsolately. There was no use sitting up in this gloom, so he blew out the candle, mounted the bar and turned in.

For an hour or so the hardness of his bed cheated sleep. Yet it might have been worse. He heard no scamper of pack rats—only the steady drumming of rain. There'd be a muddy trail over Soupdish Pass tomorrow, of course, but he'd make it. By noon he'd be snugly housed in Cunningham's cabin at Steelhead Lake.

His first idea had been to go via a roundabout route on the narrow gage. But at Fair Play, Ed Patterson, to whom he had presented a letter of introduction, had tipped him that he'd see more of the country by packing over the pass. Patterson himself had furnished an outfit for the trip.

Now, after a restless period on that hardwood bar, Gregg fell asleep. He was dreaming about Smeed in its hey-dey, or rather about Silver Sam Smeed as sketched by Patterson, when he was awakened by some sound which was neither rain nor pack rat. When he opened his eyes his first impression was that the candle was burning.

THAT was all wrong. Most certainly he had blown the candle out before turning in. Raising himself sleepily on one elbow, he looked about. Yes, the candle was still burning. Above he saw the stringy strands of cobweb. Below, on the dust-littered floor, he saw the faded jack of spades. He heard nothing. The rain had stopped and the place was like a tomb.

Then, from a gloomy corner of Smeed's barroom, came a voice.

"Don't let me disturb you none, mister. Was just aimin' to turn in myself."

A figure advanced into the light. It was inhumanly lean and its frightfully deep-sunken eyes alone would have been enough to startle Gregg. Gregg threw off his blankets and leaped to the floor. He stood there staring widely.

"Slaughter's the name," the lean man said. "Ike Slaughter."

The voice was squeaky. The intruder himself was old, yet spry, and advanced

with a springy step. He was grinning hideously with teeth closed tightly together. The grin, the man's deep eye sockets and sunken cheeks, gave an effect not unlike a death's-head. Gregg stood there blinking. Was he dreaming?

He saw that he who called himself Ike Slaughter wore gum boots; his ears heard the thump of those boots on the barroom floor. And there were two burnt matches near the candle. Gregg himself had used only one. This human scarecrow must have used the other to relight the wick during Gregg's sleep. Therefore he could be no dream-born illusion of the ghost town.

The other, still grinning his ghastly grin, stopped directly in front of Gregg. He towered there, tall but thin to the point of emaciation. His face was wide at the forehead, narrow at the chin. On his long, skinny neck the Adam's apple stood out as sharply as the breastbone of a starved turkey, and Gregg, noting a linear scar which receded each way from it, wondered whether whiplash, rope or hook had ever encircled that throat.

"Slaughter's the name. If it's any of my business, young feller, who might you be?"

Gregg steadied himself against the bar. His fingers, rubbing his eyes, felt the dampness of his brow. He answered huskily:

"I'm Everett Gregg, a geologist. The rain drove me in here."

"Any port in a storm, eh?" cackled Slaughter. "Well, I reckon you got as much business here as anybody else. Me, I'm beddin' down upstairs."

He made, however, no move toward the stairs at the rear. Instead he sprang spryly to the bar and perched there, swinging his booted legs and grinning at Gregg. Wide awake now, the younger man was less apprehensive. No doubt this was some broken-down prospector, perhaps some derelict denizen of the old Smeed who had wandered back to peck rock on familiar ground.

"Glad to know you, Mr. Slaughter. Been here long?" he probed.

"Off and on all my life," the oldster wheezed.

The sunken eyes kept a steady stare on Gregg. It was disconcerting, that stare, and Gregg, seeing his own face in the mirror beyond, was startled by the tension of his features. He tried to relax. To prove that he wasn't in the least afraid he lighted a cigaret and inquired casually:

"An old-timer around here, are you? Were you here when Smeed was a live camp?"

"Was I here when Smeed was a live camp?" shrilled Slaughter. "Did you hear that? He asts if I, Ike Slaughter, was around in them days, an' the answer is I sure as hell was. And not six feet from where I am now, young feller. I was Sam Smeed's friend and bartender."

In the last announcement a note of pride colored the squeak of Ike Slaughter.

"In that case," Gregg prompted genially, "you didn't need to be ashamed of your bar. This must have been something of a swell layout for a mining camp."

"It was for a fact," agreed Slaughter. "It sure was one swell set-up, even if Sam never did git it paved with them silver dollars."

The fellow was still staring like a death's-head. The last phrase gave Gregg his first reason to suspect that Slaughter might be crazy as a loon. Certainly the remark made no sense. However Gregg inquired politely—

"The Silver Dollar was the name of Smeed's mine, wasn't it?"

"It was that," Slaughter agreed with a wag of his head, "an' Sam was danged proud of it. He was a proud man, Sam was. And a fast spender. When he built this barroom in order to keep his men from driftin' down to Fair Play on Sattidy nights, he aimed to outdazzle every barroom in five States. Spent a mint on it, he did, and it sure was a beaut."

"Rich, was he?"

"Rich?" Slaughter looked sorrowfully at Gregg, as if in pity at the listener's

complete ignorance. "Sure he was rich. A hunerd thousand dollars was small change to Silver Sam Smeed. He hearn about a bar on Broadway, New York, or maybe it was Chicagy, where the floor was paved with silver dollars. Some sport come in an' told about it. Sam was drunk that night, an' right away he said he'd pave *his* barroom the same way. Them Easterners couldn't top no bets of his, he said. He made the brag in public, and when he sobered up he had to make good."

"You mean," Gregg echoed in amazement, "that he actually paved this floor with silver dollars?"

"No, but he aimed to," Slaughter insisted. "Fact is, the idear was made to order fer Silver Sam Smeed, drunk or sober. It fit the name of his mine too, the Silver Dollar, like a buckskin glove. Top o' that, the stunt would make Sam talked about from Denver to Frisco, and Sam sure liked to be talked about. So he measured the barroom floor and figgered out how many coins it'd take; then he ordered his Denver bank to ship 'em by narrer gage to Fair Play."

Gregg no longer suspected that Slaughter was crazy. But he found himself leaning strongly to a theory that he, Gregg, was being made sport of. Surely this old derelict was pulling his leg. However, Everett Gregg chose to voice no doubt. Instead he inquired—

"Wasn't Smeed afraid somebody'd steal dollars off his floor?"

"Not with them dollars grouted in cement," Slaughter wheezed. "Them coins was to lay 'bout a quarter inch apart edge to edge, countersunk, y'understand, in a concrete floor. Some shifty gent might gouge one or two out on the sly, but he couldn't hardly snitch 'em in bulk."

Gregg looked toward the floor and pursued amiably—

"How many silver dollars would it take?"

"This floor's forty foot by twenty, bar to wall," Slaughter said. "Figger it out yourself."

GREGG did some rapid mental calculation. Silver dollars in a row with about a quarter of an inch between adjacent rims would run, he estimated, perhaps six to the foot. Multiplying six by six by twenty by forty, the result astonished him.

"It would take something like twenty-eight thousand, eight hundred dollars," he announced.

"Go to the head of the class," cackled Ike Slaughter. "Twenty-eight thousand silver dollars was zackly what Sam Smeed had shipped in sacks, from his Denver bank to Fair Play. But he never did git 'em up here to Smeed."

"What seemed to be the trouble?" Gregg inquired, more at ease now. This foolery, he decided, was a good way to while away a bit of time, even if the man was cracked.

"Sam," Slaughter squeaked at him, "kept his plans as secret as he could. Coupla gents named Higgins and Smith, masons and handy men around here, was to do the actual groutin' in of them dollars. Naturally they had to know all about it. Me too, seein' as I was his friend, knew the plans. Smeed picked Higgins and Smith fer guards, and he picked a dark night to freight them sacks up from Fair Play. Smeed made the run hisself, and the three of 'em had four fast mules hitched to a stout wagon. They started with the coin all right, close to a ton of it, but they never got here. Smeed, Higgins and Smith was found dead by the trail halfway up the canyon. The mules and a empty wagon was found loose in the woods."

"And the twenty-eight thousand dollars?" Gregg prompted.

"It," Slaughter assured him, "just didn't show up nowhere. That was twenty-six year ago, and sheriffs 've been huntin' fer them coins ever since."

"Did the mine keep running after Smeed's death?"

"A year or so. Then it played out and the town went to pot."

Ike Slaughter yawned. Then he

stretched his bony arms, jumped to the floor and started shambling toward the foot of the stairs.

"Time to turn in," he squeaked. Turning suddenly, he added, "But hold on. Maybe you'd like a drink." He cocked one hairless eyebrow inquiringly at Gregg.

Then, without waiting for a response, he moved around the end of the bar to a position behind it. From beneath it he produced a quart bottle of liquor. Then up came an old rag and two cracked glasses.

With his rag the man mopped the bar for a space in front of him. The celerity of his gesture half convinced Gregg that indeed he had once been a bartender.

"Just like old times, huh?" Slaughter cackled. He poured two drinks, pushed one of them toward Gregg. "It's on the house, young feller. Step up."

The pitch of this invitation was wild and shrill. Slaughter was again grinning like a death's-head and the frightful stare was again fixed in those deep-sunk eyes. He looked crazy. Was he? The candle, now burned almost to the bar, flickered in its grease. In the mirror, Everett Gregg again saw the tension on his own face.

With an effort he righted his mood and faced Slaughter with a smile. The oldster continued to stare fixedly, without friendliness or menace, at Gregg.

Not to offend him, Gregg took up a glass.

"Did they ever catch up with whoever got away with that coin?" he inquired.

Now a sly look came to the narrow visage of Slaughter. His voice lowered to a husky whisper.

"Sure, they caught him," he whispered. "They not only caught him, but they hanged him."

"Served him right," echoed Gregg, and drained his dram. It was powerful. After making a wry face Gregg added, "Him, you say? Did one man get away with those dollars single-handed?"

"He sure did, and they hanged him high," insisted Slaughter.

"Who was it?" asked Gregg.

Slaughter's lean face now became slyer than ever. His lips twisted to a leer of confidence. Leaning far out over the bar, he beckoned Gregg nearer. Then he whispered:

"You're lookin' right at him, young feller. It was me they hanged." Ghoulishly, the old scamp drew a finger across the scar encircling his long skinny neck. "See?"

Was he crazy? Or, having sized Gregg up as a tenderfoot dupe, was he merely making sport? Between those possible answers Gregg wavered.

"They sure hanged me," Slaughter said. "And it hurt like hell."

It was all too raw to be mere foolery, Gregg decided, so the man must be mad. To humor him he answered:

"O.K. They caught you, hanged you, and it hurt like hell. Speaking of hell, how come you to leave there?"

"Well," Slaughter wheezed, still leaning far and confidentially over the bar and looking crazier than ever, "somethin' had to be done with that coin, didn't it? It was still hid in the woods."

"I see," Gregg rejoined sympathetically. "The load of coin was still cached in the woods. So twenty-six years after they hanged you, you came back to dispose of it. Put it in a bank, did you?"

"In a bank?" mocked Slaughter. "Why would I put it in a bank. It wasn't my money, was it? It was Sam Smeed's. He was my friend. He meant to put those dollars right here in this floor. It would have done him proud, and it was his last wish. He died trying to carry it out, didn't he? So that's what I done. Only last month I paved the whole floor of this room with that silver. And you're standin' right on it now, young feller!"

Immediately Gregg reverted to his theory that this old-timer, far from being crazy, was merely trying to make a fool of his audience. Gregg no doubt was now expected to stoop and scratch wildly in the inches of dust littering the

floor. That would be the cue for a hoarse laugh from Slaughter.

Such being the play, Everett Gregg declined to scratch on the floor. He declined even to look downward. Instead, in a voice elaborately casual, he said:

"Well, thanks for the drink. It must be pretty late by now, so what do you say we turn in?"

A flicker of disappointment crossed Slaughter's face. With his voice pitched to a peevish whine he asked—

"You wouldn't call me a liar, would you, young feller?"

"By no means," Gregg assured him solemnly.

"And you wouldn't go so far's to claim I'm looney, wouldja?"

"Absurd!" Gregg echoed.

It seemed to satisfy Slaughter. He picked up his own untasted glass and drained the liquor therefrom at a gulp. With his old rag he again mopped the bar. He wiped the glasses and put them away with the bottle. Then he emerged from behind the bar and clumped, in his gum boots, to the foot of the stairs.

There he turned and for another long minute his hollow eyes bored a stare through Gregg. The lips were parted; teeth were locked tight in a horrible grin. In spite of himself Gregg winced.

GREGG was glad when the old scamp turned his back and mounted the steps. The candle was nearly spent, and in the dim light Gregg could barely see him. Yet he heard each thump of those boots as the figure ascended. When Slaughter had reached the upper floor and passed entirely from sight, Gregg could still hear the steps. The man was clumping across a plank floor just over the barroom. He stopped at a spot directly above Gregg.

Then Gregg heard, or thought he heard, the creak of a cot. Followed a brief interval of silence. Then came one loud thump on the floor above. Gregg divined that the fellow must have seated himself on a cot, pulled off one of his boots and dropped it to the floor.

"Since he's gone to bed," Gregg thought, "I might as well make it unanimous." He moved toward that end of the bar on which his blankets were still stretched, more than a little pleased at having resisted the bait offered by Slaughter. He looked at his watch: It was 11:15 P.M. He was on the point of blowing out the candle, when something made him hesitate. He had heard the thud of only one boot. Weirdly he found himself tense, his ears straining expectantly, waiting for the fall of the other boot.

Five minutes later he was still waiting. It was an infinitesimally small detail, but as the seconds passed it assumed for Gregg an overwhelming importance. The strange tension enmeshed him like a cord.

He began to imagine things. He began to wonder. Was he, Gregg, walking in his sleep? Had he dreamed Slaughter? No, because Slaughter, flesh and blood, had just gone to bed. The seal of proof would come any instant now—his ears would hear Slaughter's second boot drop with a plop on the loft floor.

For that trifling detail of ultimate reassurance Gregg waited. He waited one minute, two, three. The house was like a tomb. The second boot did *not* drop. There was not so much as the creaking of a cot. There was no shuffle, no stirring, not even a breath, and most certainly that last boot was not kicked off on the floor.

Again his reflection in the bar mirror shocked Gregg. He saw himself painfully alert, his face drawn in lines of taut anxiety, head inclined sidewise. Had a pin dropped up there Gregg would, he was sure, have heard it.

Neither pin nor boot dropped.

At length Gregg could stand the suspense no longer. The thing to do, he decided, was to take his flash and have a look upstairs. No doubt everything was all right. But sight of Slaughter, recumbent on a cot above, was the only way to prove it.

Gregg drew his pocket flash and went to the steps at the rear. A bit sheepishly he mounted them, projecting his flash ahead. When he reached the top he saw a long, dusty room, bare except for a disreputable cot at its center.

On the cot were a few old blankets. Ike Slaughter was not under or among those blankets. Under the cot there was nothing. Gregg's flash explored every corner of the room. He saw that there was no egress other than the steps. Yet Slaughter was gone.

Had he *ever* been there? Yes; of that there was proof. On the floor beside the cot lay one gum boot.

It took the breath from Gregg. He stared at the boot. Then he advanced to all quarters of the room, exploring with his flash. He made sure that Slaughter was not hiding. He made certain that no door or other stairway or trap in the roof existed to explain his disappearance. All he found was a window, the glass of which was cracked and punctured by hailstones. It was shut and latched on the inside. No single hole in the glass pane was large enough to permit Slaughter's exit. The man had positively evaporated. All that remained of him was one gum boot.

BREATHLESSLY Gregg descended to the barroom below. His heart was thumping; his face was bathed in cold sweat. Desperately he reassembled his wits. He must clear away the cobwebs and stick to the facts. What were the facts? Fact number one was that Slaughter had ascended to the loft and removed a boot, which was still there. Fact number two was that there was no egress from the loft except these visible steps. Fact number three was that Slaughter was not now in the loft. Did that mean that Slaughter, prowling resident of a ghost town, was himself a—?

"A ghost? Bunk. A dream? No!" Gregg spoke aloud. "I talked to him, didn't I? He stood here and lied his head off for an hour, didn't he? He not only exists, but he's the biggest liar that ever—"

No epithet which Gregg could summon seemed fit to measure Slaughter's prowess as a liar. To prove that he *was* a liar it was only necessary to establish that this same barroom floor was not paved with silver dollars.

Standing on it now, Gregg raked his foot edgewise in a swath through the dirt on the floor. Having done so, he stooped. With his fingers he felt of the exposed floor surface, contemptuously sure that he would touch only old and rotting wood.

Instead, the surface seemed to be cement. The candle, having burned to its grease on the bar, went out suddenly. Thumbing his flash, Gregg directed it along the space which his fingers stroked. Instantly he stiffened to the rigidity of a rock. He saw rows of silver dollars. They lay flat, grouted flush in concrete. Ghost or wraith of a dream, Slaughter in at least one respect was no liar. Smeed's barroom floor was paved with silver dollars!

The monstrous fact stupefied Gregg. Was the entire area of the floor like this? He moved ten feet to the right and raked again with his foot. Yes, there were more rows of dollars. Gregg tried many spots, found them all the same. The job was complete. The coins lay only about a quarter of an inch apart. Some one had actually carried out the original specifications for Samuel Smeed's barroom floor.

Examining carefully, Gregg came to three conclusions: First, the job had been executed by an amateur; this was suggested by certain irregularities and by areas of improperly troweled surface. Second, the job did not date from the old days of Smeed; it had the look and smell of fresh cement; most likely it was not over a month or two old. Third, the inch and a half of dirt on top of it, which Gregg had mistaken for wind-blown dust, was too even in depth to be dust naturally deposited. A human hand had sprinkled it there—perhaps, Gregg

thought, to hide the job till it was firmly set; or perhaps to let it cure without cracking, as contractors often cover new concrete roads.

But what, wondered Gregg, was the motive? Slaughter's story was, of course, out. Certainly Smeed's murderer had not returned, twenty-six years after his hanging, to pave this barroom with the loot. Here, nevertheless, it lay. Or were these metallic circles, laid in a mosaic pattern, really coins? To settle that, Gregg produced his knife and began gouging for a sample.

After three minutes of work he had still failed to dig out one, proving that Smeed's original plan had not been so vulnerable after all. No stealthy thief could have stolen any considerable section of the floor.

With patience Gregg at last pried out a sample. It was, he found, a genuine dollar minted thirty years before. His next step was clear: He must take this sample and report the entire business to Sheriff Ed Patterson at Fair Play.

He immediately began rerolling his blankets. In order to use both hands at the chore, he pocketed the flashlight. Awkwardly in the dark he completed the roll, wondering whether he would find that some grim ghost of a horsethief had stolen his horses. It would almost require such a touch as that, he thought, to top off this night at Smeed.

Weird fancies haunted him, yet in the midst of them a sound emerged, or seemed to. He thought he heard a step on the gravel outside the building. He stiffened to attention. Sternly he tried to assure himself that he had heard nothing at all. All his senses must be affected by a riot of tricky imaginings.

In the dark, he shouldered his bedroll. But after one groping step toward the exit he again heard a tread on the gravel without. This time he was sure of it. It was an approaching step. Distinctly he heard it coming nearer, and ahead of it came a pale glimmer of light. Some one with a lantern was moving directly toward the barroom door.

Who could it be but Slaughter? Slaughter, having made a mysterious exit from the loft, must be stalking him. What trick was he up to now? Gregg quickly decided to spy on him. Quietly therefore he groped his way around to the rear side of the bar. He set the blanket roll down and stooped.

Half a minute later he heard some one enter by the front entrance. With the intruder came a mellow light. Rising a trifle, Gregg peered cautiously over the bar. He saw a man with a lantern. The man was bent forward, looking down, and Gregg could not see his face; but he was of a stout, stocky build and therefore could not be Ike Slaughter.

Gregg dodged down behind his shelter. He listened. He heard wary footsteps reach the center of the room. Then Gregg peered again. This time he had to raise his head higher, for the intruder was now on his knees. With gloved hands the newcomer was scooping dirt to one side. In a moment Gregg heard his gasp of astonishment.

Taking no chances, Gregg remained hidden. This fellow, he had noticed, wore a holstered gun. If suddenly startled he might shoot. On the other hand, he might be only a curious rancher, here to spike or confirm a rumor that the floor was paved with coins.

Gregg could now hear the scratching of the man's knife. Obviously the man was digging out a sample of the dollars. For a minute or more the blade scraped. Holding his breath, Gregg listened. Suddenly the other man, with a cement-crusted dollar in his hand, stood to full height. His awe-struck comment came plainly to Gregg—

"Shoot me fer a wall-eyed sheepherder if this ain't real money!"

Limp and speechless, Gregg arose. Sheer relief left him weak. The other man whirled suddenly and was snatching at his holster when Gregg managed to protest hoarsely:

"Don't shoot, please. You know me. I'm Everett Gregg."

The face across the bar relaxed into a grim smile. Here was the man of all men whom Gregg wanted most to see. He was Ed Patterson, sheriff from Fair Play.

RECITING his story to Ed Patterson helped vastly to steady Gregg. Patterson was a dependable, comfortable sort of man—broad, stolid, of even temper. His granite-gray eyes were more often inclined to bore into the truth than to doubt or rebuke.

When Gregg finished his story the sheriff removed his Stetson from his round, bald head. After twirling it on his finger, he stared thoughtfully into its depths.

"It checks with a yarn brought in by Doc Asa Cutler of Como," he announced. "That's why I'm here."

"But why," Gregg puzzled, "did Ike Slaughter feed me that pack of lies?"

"As far as I know," Patterson answered gruffly, "he didn't feed you anything but straight goods. Anyway, the deal twenty-six year ago was just like he said."

"You mean that Sam Smeed actually did plan to pave this floor with silver dollars?"

"Yeah, and while haulin' the coin up here to the mine, him and his two guards was murdered by Bartender Slaughter. Slaughter was caught, but they couldn't make him tell where he'd stashed that load o' coin."

"But Slaughter," Gregg protested, "claims he was hanged."

"He was, but not quite long enough," the sheriff explained dryly. "The jury acquitted him and he walked outa court a free man. In the street a mob roped him, picked out a tall pine and strung him to the top limb. My dad, who was sheriff in those days, loped up just in time to cut the rascal down. Slaughter rambled off and ain't showed up since."

"What did they have on him?" Gregg inquired.

"Plenty. Only four men knew the night the coin was to be freighted and the route it was comin' on. Three of 'em were shot dead off the wagon, and the other one was Slaughter. The three dead men were riddled with buckshot. Slaughter had a shotgun he always kept at his bar. A couple of his empty home-made shells was found at the spot. All the same, Slaughter had a smart lawyer and was acquitted."

"But why should he come back after twenty-five years," Gregg puzzled, "and pave the Smeed barroom with his loot?"

Patterson was no less puzzled. All he could hazard was:

"Slaughter must 've gone screwy. Crazy with remorse, maybe. So finally he comes back and puts the coin right where Smeed aimed to put it himself, and then aims to crack down on any one who gouges one of 'em out."

Gregg was unconvinced. A man mean enough to kill three associates in cold blood would not, he felt certain, go mad with remorse. Too, he would have spent the money long ago.

"You mentioned a Dr. Cutler," Gregg reminded the sheriff.

"Doc Cutler," Patterson explained, "came by here day before yesterday, fishing. Wading down the creek, he heard sounds from this barroom. Sounded like a hammer pounding on a concrete floor. Curious, Doc came for a look. He was just in time to see a tramp dodge out the back door. A hammer, a chisel and an empty sack lay on the floor. Looked like this tramp had been chippin' out pieces of concrete. Looking closer, Doc seen the floor was paved with dollars. He went to Como with the story, which same just reached my office late this evening."

"The tramp," Gregg guessed, "was Slaughter. Needing a dollar for spending money, he was chipping it from his own floor. My own hunch is that he's not crazy and that a key motive is still missing."

Taking the lantern with them, they went out behind the building. There they discovered an old tub in which

mortar had been mixed. A pile of empty cement sacks lay nearby, as well as a heap of creek sand.

"Maybe he stole the cement," Patterson hazarded. "Then, usin' creek sand, he just needed to mix a lean mortar and flood the floor with a one inch layer. While it was wet, he could lay the dollars out in rows and they'd sink flush of their own weight. When the mortar set, he had a silver dollar floor. What do you say we have a look upstairs?"

They ascended to the loft, finding it as Gregg had last seen it. One boot, and one only, lay on the floor. But as to the mystery of Slaughter's disappearance Patterson quickly scored. For when he examined the cracked and hail-pitted window pane he discovered a large section of loose glass.

It covered the lower half of the window. With small effort, the sheriff took this loose pane bodily from its grooves and set it upright on the floor. He could now thrust his head and broad shoulders through the hole. The roof of a lean-to was only a few feet below.

"The window was probably like this when Slaughter sneaked out on you," Patterson guessed. "Then he reached his hand back in, picked up the triangle of broken glass and set it in its groove."

"And so stealthily that I couldn't hear him," added Gregg.

The two went back down to the barroom. There Patterson examined the floor at many spots and made certain it was completely paved with dollars. Gregg, absorbed with vain wonderings, moved toward the rear and peered through stringy strands of cobwebs into an area beneath the stairs. He saw a closed door, which he guessed gave to a mop and broom closet.

Patterson joined him. They brushed the cobwebs aside, went to the closet door and tried to open it. It was locked.

"I know where the key is, if you gents want in there!" shrilled a voice back of them.

Gregg, whirling about, saw a tall bag of bones with deep hollows under hairless brows. The teeth were locked in the same frightfully skull-like grin that Gregg knew. It was Ike Slaughter himself, and he was approaching across the barroom.

He seemed to be limping. But that, Gregg saw, was merely because he had one boot off and one on.

Instantly Patterson's gun was out and on him.

"Hands up, Ike Slaughter!"

"You ain't pinchin' me, are you, Sheriff?" Slaughter whined. "If so, what fer?"

Patterson stared coldly for a moment and then reluctantly sheathed his weapon. A second's reflection reminded him that he could not arrest Slaughter. Having once been tried for the murder of Smeed and the two guards, the acquitted man could not be tried again for the same crime.

Slaughter stood for a moment in a pose of ghoulish insolence. Then he wheeled and limped to the end of the bar. He moved to a position back of it, and once again Gregg saw him mop the bar top with an old rag. Again out came the bottle of liquor and two glasses.

Patterson had advanced sternly to the front of the bar and stood facing Slaughter across it. Slaughter poured two drinks. One he pushed toward the sheriff.

"It's on the house, Sheriff."

Patterson shook his head.

"I'm not drinking with a murderer," he said.

Slaughter rested his bony elbows on the bar. Across it his white and fleshless face leered mockery at Patterson.

"And suppose," he cackled shrilly, "I didn't kill Smeed!"

"No good," Gregg cut in. "You confessed that much to me."

"I did no such thing," echoed Slaughter. "I said they hanged me fer it, and that I was the gent got away with them silver dollars, but I didn't say I killed Smeed. And I didn't say just when and how I got away with said dollars.

What's more, I didn't kill Sam Smeed."

"Prove it," Patterson challenged stonily.

"I sure will, and this time I'm pickin' my own judge and jury," Slaughter shrilled.

He looked eagerly up and down the bar, as if a crew of thirsty miners were assembled there instead of only Patterson and Gregg.

"If you did not kill Smeed and his two guards, prove it," again challenged Patterson.

"If I do, will you drink with me, Sheriff?" wheezed Slaughter. His eyes, rheumy and deep-sunk, seemed to plead with Patterson.

Patterson rested his own blunt elbows on that same bar, faced Slaughter across it and said—

"Shoot."

GREGG stood by in a suspenseful mood much like that in which, earlier this same night, he had waited in vain for a second boot to hit the loft floor.

"After they hung me," Slaughter squeaked, "I put in twenty-five year ramblin' from hell to breakfast. Mostly prospectin'. Finally I wanders back to the old diggings. I come right here and got in the habit of campin' in the loft over this bar. Daytimes I chip rock in all the old stopes and tunnels. In one of 'em I find bags of silver dollars 'longside of a gent who's been a long time dead."

"Found a dead man, did you?" Patterson prompted. "What did he die of?"

"Lead poisoning. And I seen right away how-come."

"Yeah?" Patterson's face was still uncompromisingly grim.

From beneath the bar Slaughter now produced an old and tarnished liquor flask. It was apparently of silver and the engraved work on its sides was richly ornate.

"Coupla nights before Smeed and his guards went fer the coin," Slaughter said, "a dude stranger come in here and bought drinks for all hands. Seemed like a harmless little feller. After buyin' a few rounds, he pulled out this here flask. Filled it from a bottle, he did, and then put it in his inside right breast pocket. Betcher they's old-timers alive today who'll remember him fillin' this same flask, sech fancy pocket jugs not bein' common in them days. In fact, its the only one of its kind I ever saw, and I never forgot the design on it. Well, twenty-five years later I find this same flask in a stope, 'longside a load o' coin and a man who's a long time dead."

"Proving what?" countered Patterson.

"You notice a bullet hole plumb through it?" Slaughter piped.

The sheriff nodded. Gregg himself saw that a bullet had once perforated the flask.

"That dude," cackled Slaughter, "died from that bullet. I remember that he and Sam Smeed got quite chummy after awhile. I know he talked big, an' dressed the part. He must 'a' impressed Sam; and when he got liquored up Sam must 'a' told him about the silver dollars. That's the way I figger it. An' I figger the day Sam died, this dude stranger stepped from behind a tree with a double-barreled shotgun. He let fly with both barrels, potting Smeed and his two guards as they sat on the seat of the coin wagon. One of the guards must 'a' snatched his .45 in time to sling one slug. He made a right breast hit, but it went through the flask first. After he was holed up in the stope, that wound must 've festered. It finished him."

"You're claimin' he died from it?" Patterson asked.

Slaughter nodded. And to Gregg it seemed fairly reasonable. With a bullet in his body, a bandit might well have chosen to hole up with his loot in the nearest deserted stope. There, lacking proper treatment—if even that might have helped him—he died.

"No good," Patterson argued. "Because it was your shotgun, Slaughter, that did the shooting. They found two

of your home-made shells there, empty. In court you claimed you loaned the shotgun to Smeed for the freighting trip, but you couldn't prove it."

"I can prove it now," Slaughter echoed in shrill triumph. "'Cause in that same stope I found these.' '

He opened a drawer back of the bar and brought out two rusty, double-barreled shotguns. One was hammerless. One was not.

"This here one's mine." Slaughter tapped the hammer gun. "The other one must 'a' belonged to the dude stranger."

"Why would he take both of them to the stope?" challenged Patterson.

"Why wouldn't he? Maybe he expected to stand siege there. If so, two scatter-guns would be better than one. Anyway, there they were and here they are. It boils down to this: Either I shot Smeed with my shotgun, or the stranger done it with his'n."

"I'll admit that much," Patterson said. "Either you did it with your shotgun or somebody else did it with another. We've known that for twenty-six years, because all three victims were riddled with buckshot."

A delighted grin formed on Slaughter's bony old face. He rubbed his hands together gleefully, then spat on them.

"All right. It was either me or him. It was either me, his friend, that Sam always trusted and aimed to put in charge of a silver dollar barroom, or a stranger. Take your choice, Sheriff. Say it was me if you wanter—and say I done it with this same old two-bore barroom bouncer what Sam hisself give me fer a present. 'Take it, Ike,' Sam said, 'and shoot hell outa any and all bums and crooks. Stand flatfooted on my silver dollar floor, Ike,' he said, 'an' let 'em have it!' Them was Sam's very words, Sheriff."

Slaughter picked up the hammer gun and displayed its butt plate to Patterson. On it was engraved: *"From Sam to Ike."*

The old bartender's eyes were now swimming with rheumy tears and his face was flushed. Gregg sensed that the old-timer was pressing hard toward some climax which had long seethed in his mind. Patterson must have caught that, too. For he invited gravely:

"I ain't interruptin' none, am I, Slaughter? Shoot."

Slaughter nudged the other shotgun toward the sheriff.

"Look it over," he cackled. "It's the kind you've potted ducks with many a time. It wasn't made like mine was, fer close range in a barroom where they's no chance to miss."

Slaughter then tossed a key to Gregg.

"Young feller, unlock that broom closet under the stairs."

Gregg went to the rear of the room and unlocked the door of the broom closet. When he opened the door, he staggered back, shocked.

In the narrow closet was a chair. Seated in the chair was a human skeleton, the bones of a smallish man. It was crudely wired together and it sat upright, without a shred or rag on it and without a knuckle or a rib missing. The arch of bleached ribs, the round, empty eye sockets and the grinning teeth surprised Gregg so that his backward leap almost toppled him in a sprawl on the silver dollar floor.

When he turned, Slaughter stood at the far end of the bar and about forty feet from the closet. He was aiming with the "Sam-to-Ike" shotgun. A single roar detonated as the old bartender fired both barrels.

Amazed, Gregg again faced the skeleton. The arch of ribs was still there; so were the arms and legs. But the skull was gone. *Only* the skull was gone. A headless skeleton sat upright in the closet. And Gregg saw that on the wall back of the position occupied a moment ago by the skull there was a sheet of white paper. Buckshot had perforated this paper, albeit the perforations were limited to an area no larger than the palm of a hand.

Patterson's jaw dropped. He realized, as did Gregg, that Slaughter's gun had *two choke barrels*. And that most shotguns have one choker and one spread or scatter barrel. Not conceivably had three men seated abreast on a wagon seat been riddled by a volley from two choke barrels. Smeed himself, in a futile snatch for his borrowed weapon, must have fired those twin chokers.

"Sam missed him, but I didn't!" came in shrill exultation from Slaughter. He was again at mid-bar and facing Patterson.

With calm deliberation the sheriff picked up the glass of liquor which, a few minutes ago, he had declined.

"To Silver Sam Smeed!" he offered.

Ike Slaughter drank with him, tears streaming down his cheeks. That ritual complete, the old scalawag wiped both glasses and put them away. With a proud and professional celerity he mopped his bar. Then he limped out and to the stairs. With one boot on and one off, he ascended to the loft.

Gregg heard him tramp across the room above. Came next the creaking of a cot. Then there was a single loud thump. With it Everett Gregg sighed and relaxed. At last that other boot was off, and the ghost had gone to bed.

Steersman

By BILL ADAMS

When your nose is frozen, when your hands are numb,
When your hide is sea-soaked—and the wheel says, "Come!
Now it's your turn to hold me." Then, though you may grumble,
Though your limbs are weary and your cold feet stumble,
Then you tighten up your belt, and you grin if you can,
And you grip to her wheel like a good sailorman.
Two hours in the hurricane, sprays hissing past,
Snow on her canvas, snow on her mast,
Green seas on her deck's length, from railing to rail,
In sixty south latitude you combat the gale.
She'll strain at your shoulders. She'll wrench at your thighs.
She'll drop you down swiftly, then lift toward the skies.
She'll roll and she'll pitch. She'll lurch and she'll reel
While you grip to her wheel spokes and guide her swift keel.
Glue your eyes to her compass! Brace your feet for each dip!
Speak soft to your packet, to your terrified ship!
Just humor her gently; be patient; be strong!
Just humor her terrors and steer her along!
She's a soul of her own, and cold death's dread she knoweth
When the storm demons yell where the polar wind bloweth;
When the graybacks would murder, would throttle, would choke,
'Tis your skill that shall save by a touch on the spoke!
'Tis your strength and your patience 'gainst the storm demon's might
That shall bring her through dark to the open daylight.
And some day, when nor'ard you have fetched her again,
You shall steer her in peace o'er the azure blue plain
With a warm sun above and a warm sea below
In the soft balmy trade winds where ships love to go.
So now, though you're frozen and weary and numb,
Just grin if you may, lad, and answer her. "Come!"
With strong hands on her wheel spokes, and a laugh on your lips,
All proud in your birthright—a steersman of ships!

Low Class Sport

By JAMES W. BENNETT

I DECIDED to hang up a record of sorts. I would be the first Caucasian in China to go cormorant fishing. Possibly others had tried it but, if so, I had not heard of them. I spoke of ways and means to my host's No. 1 boy. But he objected.

"Mastah, man who fish with littie bird b'long too muchee low class!"

I advised the servant tartly that the fisherman's caste was a matter of supreme indifference to me. He shrugged, and together we set forth to the fishing village at the water's edge near Foochow. Stopping at the nearest hut, the boy pounded on the door sill. The fisherman appeared. He indicated his willingness to demonstrate his craft. At the rear of the house was an enclosure in the shallow water. Standing sleepily along the bank were six repellent looking, pin-feathered birds.

The fisherman gave a peculiar, liquid whistle. The birds roused. The man dumped six fingerling fish into the shallows. Into the water, after the fish, dived the birds. That is, all but one. It refused. The fisherman snatched up a tiny switch and roundly smote the young cormorant.

"It is not hungry, that one. When this person is really training the birds, I first starve them for a day, sometimes two days."

He explained that he raised his own birds. He used a barnyard hen for hatching, the female cormorants being poor mothers. The untrained young birds, he told us, sold for as high as five Foochow dollars, while trained adult ones brought twenty-five.

He next took us along the bank to his boat. There, perched solemnly on the gunwales, were some ten black fully-grown cormorants. The foot of each was tethered to the boat by a long brass wire. About their necks were tarnished brass rings. We seated ourselves in the boat, cheek by jowl with the cormorants. It was just about the dirtiest, most odoriferous craft I had ever known.

The fisherman poled slowly into the stream, his eyes fixed on the water. Then, abruptly, he stopped and called a name. One of the birds stiffened, lifted its wings and flapped into the air, over the water. The fisherman gave that liquid whistle. The cormorant dropped like a rock. It broke the surface with a fish, about a pound in weight, squirming in its bill. Flapping aboard, it dropped the fish, which was too large for it to swallow, thanks to that brass neck ring. The man rewarded it with a small fish from a pail under the seat.

An hour passed. The sun beat down with fury on the open boat. More and more powerfully rose the smells of ten thousand fish that had met their end in this craft. I was almost ill. As if from a great distance, I heard the boy, after looking at me, order the fisherman to return to the shore. I paid the cormorant fisher. Then the boy said to me quite severely:

"My *tell* Mastah this was mos' low class! My think mastah has sat upon fish. Ey-yah! He *has* sat upon fish! Mo' bettah we go home long way, so no one can makee see us."

"Yes, boy," I said humbly, "we'll go by the most devious way possible."

The Stuff for a Man

By CHARLES TENNEY JACKSON

Author of "The Man who Cursed the Lilies"

CAPTAIN NELSE RADNOR felt the heavy drag of wet fabric across his naked legs as he slowly awakened. He rubbed salt-swollen eyes—and then a crust of half-dried blood from his hair—and looked up at the corrugated iron roof of his scow, No. 3 of the little fleet of cargo lighters which he and Fink owned together.

This was strange. He was in the crude galley-cabin aft of the cargo hold, lying in four inches of water on the floor, but he heard birds singing. Bright sunlight fell through the door. When he raised his body, aching in every joint and weak from that wound on his head, to glance out, his swollen throat croaked amazement.

He saw a sea of grass—green and brown—spreading everywhere under a bright, soft Louisiana sky. He had lost consciousness, after that fight with Fink, with the barge rolling helplessly in the full gale that drove the lighters away from the stranded steamship *Galatis* off Southwest Pass. He had gone to sleep, as it were, in a black rising sea, and now he woke up in what looked like a cow pasture.

Directly aft were some hurricane-wracked oak trees, stripped of leaves, a few wisps of gray moss still clinging, and in them the blackbirds were singing. Red wings flashed above snow-white shells of this tiny ridge, a lone *chênière*—tiny oak-grown shell islet—of the Gulf Coast.

"Let's see, now," muttered Skipper

Nelse. "Fink must be dead. I knocked him overboard after he cut the towline, when he said that he'd gone in with the New Orleans wharf gang to steal the silk."

Silk! His dulled brain began to remember. From the bulkhead door to the cargo hold a long, twisted breadth of gaily flowered cloth sopped in dirty bilge water over the cabin floor. That was what had been tangled about his bare legs. Nelse crawled unsteadily to the afterdeck to lie in the warm sun. Sawgrass and prairie cane in every direction. Eastward the cypress forests along the Mississippi were a smudgy gray line. Northward a few other *chênières* rose above the grass. No living thing except the blackbirds, an angle of ducks in the south and a lone egret flashing white under the sun.

Nelse Radnor, being a sailor, considered weather and his bearings first.

"The *Galatis's* radio said gale force, but this was a hurricane," he grumbled. "The sea came in over the marshes, and this scow rode it out. Stranded here in the grass; but when? How long have I been knocked out?"

Then he thought of his crooked partner, Fink. The wharf rats hadn't got the silk as they had planned with Fink. Nelse went to peer under the corrugated iron roof again. Boxes and shipping cases piled high; one knocked open where the swathe of silk had been dragged out.

"Fink did that. I caught him at it; he wanted to make sure the silk was on this lighter and not the others. Well, they're likely all lost. That's the end of this dirty business."

Somehow Nelse was glad. A bronzed Norse sailor should have no business except tall ships and the sea. Nelse had come from the Pacific Coast a year ago as first officer on a vessel that had been laid up in New Orleans. No berth was to be had, so he went into this river lighterage business with Fink. Now he understood about Fink; that man was no better than a river pirate himself. When their three little scows and the tug had been employed to remove cargo from the *Galatis* on the bar Fink saw a chance.

A customs inspector, along with the shipping agent, had supervised the job properly till the rising sea had driven the scows from the ship's side. Nelse remembered that some insurance man was there, also, and they had cautioned him that No. 3 scow had the most valuable lot of the *Galatis's* cargo—some forty thousand dollars' worth of China silk. The cargo slings had sent it over, along with some miscellaneous stuff taken on at San Pedro, and here the scow was lost in a Barataria swamp with one living man in command.

Nelse grinned in the little salt-blurred mirror by his berth. In the dark, the half-laden scow pounding at the end of the towline, Fink had muttered that this one was to be cut out. The tow captain and the customs men could not do a thing in this rising sea. The scow would fall away over along the west levees, and the crooks had a launch that would hook on to it. The silks would be transferred and hidden before any one could interfere.

"He said that—" Nelse grinned—"and I jumped him. Fink tried to gun me, but all he got in was a crack on my skull. Good squarehead skull, eh? So I knocked him over to the river—and then?"

Nelse didn't remember the rest clearly. Wind and sea, the lost scow in the Pass currents. When he came to he heard the blackbirds singing. Now he washed the wound under his yellow hair, stared at the blue, steady eyes in the glass, and at his puffed lips. His hairy chest and his legs were scratched and sore. He looked at himself and then about his sodden cabin. He had worn nothing but a pair of linen trousers in that hot cargo space when the fight started. But now?

There was not much on him except the waistband. He looked at the hooks by his berth. Not a shirt, coat or pair

of pants remained. His little cabinet with his shaving things had vanished. The dish rack also; and only two rusty pans were in sight under the upturned kerosene stove. The sea had gutted his living quarters. He found a case-knife and a can-opener, and then—great luck—his coffee jar.

HE LOOKED over the silk. The cases in the lower tier seemed so utterly wet that he pried them open and dragged the bolts from their wrappings. Glistening Shantungs and delicate, flowered fabrics were draped to dry on the hot metal roof.

Then Nelse felt thirsty, for it was a warm October day. He disliked the tropics; give him Northern sleet, black seas, frost under stars.

Was there water hidden in the saw-grass on this islet? He climbed down to the beach through scrub oaks and palmettos which scratched his naked body. There was a long pool back of the shell ridge which stood perhaps six feet higher than the swamp. Nelse tasted it. Rainwater; better than the brackish marsh stuff.

Nelse put a foot on the first grass hummock fringing the shell beach. Generations of prehistoric people had eaten mussels and left the shells here, doubtless when this was a seashore. Now miles of impassable swamp lay between the isle and the Gulf.

The castaway tried another spot of the marsh. The brown ooze covered his foot. He tried to wade a bit. No bottom. Water everywhere over deep, abysmal mud. Nelse went to the top of the shell ridge and looked all about at the sea of green.

"Look here," he muttered. "A man can't get off this place. Not a quarter of a mile long and not nearly that wide—and a man can't set foot in the swamp. How about grub? And I've no clothes!"

The mosquitos were singing, so he went back to the scow. His gashed head ached. He felt weak.

"Plenty of time to worry tomorrow," he thought. "Anyway, I'm in charge of cargo for owners or insurance people. Not Fink!"

There was no mattress, so he made a nest of silk on top of the boxes in the hold, and slept, utterly exhausted. When he awoke he was at first too stiff to move. Then he heard the tall grass singing in the breeze outside. Nelse crawled out and looked at the level green miles, the sky and sun. A smoke plume showed eastward over the distant cypress woods—some ship going up the Mississippi to New Orleans.

Skipper Nelse felt very bad that day. The best luck was that the matches in his brass canister would light a twig fire on the beach. He made coffee in a can, salty tasting coffee, but a sailor did not mind. Then he crawled to the hold and into his silk bed, wondering whether the reason he didn't worry was because a fever was making him apathetic. He awoke once mumbling about the silk, and when dawn came he was fighting a shadow which seemed to be Fink.

But when he got out in a really cool morning he felt better. The great swelling of his brow had gone down so his eyes could be of more service. But there was nothing to see except the vast, sunny marsh.

"I got to have clothes," he muttered and dragged a length of gay, flowered Oriental stuff about his shoulders and thighs.

He tried to see himself in the grimy mirror and laughed. Big Nelse Radnor, one-time deepwater mate of the Alaska lumber fleet, dressed like a gorgeous squaw! But when he went to the deck, fastening his clumsy tunic with nails and cord, laughter died.

That swamp lay sinister under the sun, silent save for the whisper of the wind in the grass.

"I must be loony, laughing like this," Nelse muttered. "How many days now? Why doesn't some one find me?

I'd rather be alone in an open boat in the ocean."

When he had made sure that it was impossible to walk upon the floating prairie about his islet he began checking up on that miscellaneous cargo hurried from the *Galatis* after the silk had come overside. He chuckled again.

"A man won't starve. Canned fruit and vegetables, mushrooms and condensed milk from California!"

Then he glanced out the door and stopped laughing. That vast, silent swamp seemed to jeer at him. Give a man the sea—not pretty silks and dainty food.

That night, wide awake, studying his plight, he heard a noise above the rustling cane outside the planks—a weak, mournful wail ending in a clamor. Nelse went to the beach and then through the scrub oaks to the edge of the mud pools.

"That's a dog," he muttered. And he shouted, "Hi, boy! This way!"

He waded as far as he dared and coaxed for half an hour before he dragged a thin red and white hound to safety. The dog of some Cajun terrapin hunter in the bayous likely. Nelse washed the shivering creature, fed it condensed milk and wrapped it in costly fabric. The next morning he discovered that the dog didn't respond to English words. He laughed and tried Norwegian, but the dog was more suspicious. It sat mute, looking at Nelse's gorgeous Oriental robe; not a bark or the wag of a tail came from it.

"All right," said the sailor, "I don't know any Cajun French. But we'll be company, you and I."

Nelse's hearty humor and courage were lessened a bit by the dog's attitude as days went by. The dog was ashamed of the man's gay togs, it appeared. The man had wrapped long, yard-wide strips of many-colored silk about him as the first cool norther blew down, till he looked like a giant doll. The dog would follow him at a distance, not at all satisfied with a diet of peas and asparagus.

Then, one day, the animal fetched in a muskrat. Nelse praised it and stewed the muskrat with mushrooms. Not so good, he decided, but the dog ate the rat and he dined on muskrat gravy and mushrooms. Twice he knocked over blackbirds by throwing the club he'd hacked from a board with his case-knife. Not so bad. Nelse grinned and gave the dog half the stew. Then the dog fetched in a terrapin and Nelse boiled the little striped turtle with asparagus.

"Terrapin stew and sleeping on silk," he told the dog, but he hadn't yet won the animal's affection.

Then one day he heard the dog bark and broke through the oaks to the other side of the *chênière*. There was a seven-foot alligator getting its last sun ere it holed up in the mud.

"Good meat," yelled Nelse, "and I've nothing but a can-opener."

The reptile sank in the swamp, and the dog regarded the man as a complete failure after that. The pile of empty cans over the scow end grew bigger, but the dog stuck exclusively to condensed milk. The chilly rains filled the *chênière* pools, so water was no problem. But canned peas for breakfast were terrible; if only a man could kill one of the millions of ducks out in the swamp pools!

That hurricane had stripped him of everything with which he might work or hunt. But one morning Nelse heard a shotgun far to the west. He climbed on the roof, all but hidden in the cane, and shouted and waved a long red silk streamer. The dog had no more doubts—this man was crazy. But half an hour later Nelse saw a movement in the cane. A cap, and the end of a pole. Presently a lean-faced muskrat trapper worked a narrow ten-foot pirogue into sight. A full moon tide had let him into a spot the Baratarians rarely reached. The cypress dugout was piled with rusty traps. But when the Cajun saw Nelse Radnor he dropped his push-pole and grabbed his shotgun.

"Hi, there!" shouted Nelse. "I'm glad to see you."

Then he understood, looking down at his swathed body, realizing that his yellow hair was long, that many weeks of brown whiskers covered his cheeks and that he bore a war club hacked with his case-knife out of a packing board.

"Don't mind this," shouted Nelse. "Listen—wait!"

The Cajun laid his shotgun across his fragile canoe and sent it back with one powerful, expert shove of his forked pole. Then he looked at Nelse across a safe gulf of bottomless ooze. Nelse came to the shell beach edge and pleaded.

"See here, don't be scared. I know how I look. I've been here more than a month. Listen! Come on over to my boat!"

The trapper shook his head in stolid, slant-eyed suspicion. When he saw the dog he muttered something, and the dog clamored with joy. Here was a proper man, a man who talked Cajun. But the man turned his eyes away from Nelse as if the sight hurt him. A mighty figure padded out in shining, flowered silk above bare, sinewy legs, with blond hair and whiskers gleaming in the sun. Nelse looked like an immense mannikin on a candy box lid.

He held out hairy arms and pleaded. The swampman listened with suspicion to mingled English and Norwegian, not understanding a word. Nelse shouted and pointed. The trapper couldn't see the scow beyond the oaks, but not for worlds would he put foot on the *chênière*. He shook his head and backed slowly away. Nelse swore and waved his club. Then he seized the loose end of his silk wrapping and tore a yard free. He wadded this up and threw it out to the pirogue runner.

"All right, I'll stay here and wait! You take that out and give it to some man who has sense. Get it to the customs people up the river—they'll understand."

The man backed away hastily, eyeing that crumple of silk.

Certainly this was a lunatic—or worse, some awful ghost materialized. How could a man get to this *chênière*, the most inaccessible in all the Barataria swamps? The Cajun poled faster when he considered it. Nelse saw him vanish in the cane screen.

THE turtle dog howled in grief. Here was a man whom he could understand, and this man was being chased off the island by this yellow-maned monster who compelled the dog to live on condensed milk. The dog regarded Nelse thereafter as one not to be trusted.

Nelse went back to his scow in despair. This was a devil of a country. He was out of every sort of food except California canned stuff. The dog was too indignant to eat anything that night.

"But I ought to be rescued," argued Nelse. "That fool will go to some shrimp platform over on the bay, or some trapper's camp, and tell them what he saw. He can show that silk to prove it. He couldn't have taken me away in that cypress shell, anyhow. A one-man canoe, made for skimming over the mud and grass hummocks."

But Nelse was lonesome as he saw the full moon rising. Two full moons he had seen in this damnable mudhole. Not seventy miles from a big city, not fifteen miles from big ships and traffic passing to the sweet sea!

He talked earnestly to the dog that night and advised him that if he didn't like canned asparagus to go catch him a rat. Then man and dog retired to their silken beds.

Another week passed—cold rains and wind, the first Norther sweeping down from Texas. Nelse didn't have even a calendar. He acquired a fearful grouch despite a feeling of hope. That Cajun surely had spread the word by now that a lost madman was in the deep swamp.

When the weather cleared Nelse

spent hours on the iron roof watching the grass, the hyacinth clumps on the mud lake, hoping for rescue.

Rescue? Surely the swamper would get some one to believe his incredible tale. *Le bon dieu*—that was a good one! But more dreary days passed for Nelse. He spent his time figuring how the silk could be salvaged. It would have to be broken from the boxes and transported by dugouts through channels hacked in the cane. He would get a share, certainly, for salvaging it. Of course, months ago, the scow and its cargo had been declared lost and the insurance settled. The obscure lighterage firm of Fink & Radnor had been wiped out, members and equipment, by the hurricane.

"Not yet," thought Nelse grimly. "I'll have a claim when I get out!"

He glared at the dog as he talked. The dog manifestly did not approve of Nelse since he had let that pirogue runner go away, the man who could speak Cajun French.

More cold weather down from the Northwest. Nelse wound more yards of silk about his shoulders and middle. The dog seemed ashamed of this whole business, following a master about who glistened in the sun and provided no better fare than canned truck. Nelse hated it now himself; as he hated the sight of silk. His resplendent garb was no longer a joke; but it kept off the chill of the swamp Winter.

Once there was frost on the scow roof when he got out to build his fire on the beach for that hated breakfast of canned fruit or vegetables. No more kerosene, tobacco or coffee; the blackbirds had left, and it was too cold to find a crab about the *chênière*.

"Might be close to Christmas," grumbled Nelse. "Think of that now!"

He didn't know and didn't care. He watched the browning cane tips, the mud channels as the low Winter tides receded.

Could even a swampman pole the lightest of pirogues in to him now?

ONE windy afternoon he was scraping his rusty kettle on the beach, whistling some ancient Norse chantey of his boyhood, when he heard a regular clump—wood on wood. Nelse dashed to the ridge and looked through the screening cane. There was a faded cap and a black hat. Two dugouts had worked in close on the barge side of the *chênière*. The dog, asleep, had not heard their silent approach.

Nelse was about to hail them eagerly, but some chill gripped him. Friendly men would have shouted to a castaway, he reasoned. Then he saw why menace had come out of the swamp.

The second pirogue man was his crooked partner, Fink.

Nelse was bewildered. He'd knocked Fink to the river in a fair, just fight, but here Fink was—armed. So Nelse folded his bare arms over his silk-clad chest and coolly looked into the vindictive eyes of the city man. The other one was the Cajun hunter. But no more friendliness was about him now than before.

Fink picked up his shotgun when he stepped on the beach.

"Here I be, Radnor. Remember your partner, Nelse?"

"Yes. And the crooked job you wanted me to help you in."

Fink laughed harshly, eyeing Nelse's splendor without humor.

"No matter what you call it. This Frenchman, Lereau, told a yarn about a wild man in this jungle, dressed like an Indian king. Nobody bothered about it except me. I knew what it meant—a crazy man decked out in silk. So I got Lereau to guide me in here."

"Yes," said Nelse. "I see." He looked at Lereau. The Cajun did not smile. "You're no friend of mine, Fink. I don't expect that."

"What's more important, every one thinks you're dead and the silk lost," said Fink. "So no one will ever ask about you again."

Fink spoke to Lereau in the coast patois. The trapper took the shotgun,

after some stubborn, reluctant argument, but gave in and held it pointed at Nelse. Fink loosed an automatic pistol at his belt and climbed on the stern of the scow.

"If you make a move Lereau will blow buckshot through you," said Fink. "I want a look at the silk. Damaged, is it?"

"Not much. Some got water-stained. The hold was tight. How can the stuff be got out and up to the river?"

"It'll go. But you're through, Nelse —silk pants and all. You don't figure any more."

Nelse studied his tone. He had tried to kill Fink, but Fink had managed to get picked up from the river. Fink had never told the truth, of course. He had thought the scow and Nelse Radnor lost till the Baratarian, Lereau, got drunk up on the Algiers waterside.

Fink was laughing harshly under the scow roof. Laughing at the silk nest on the packing cases, the looted boxes of canned stuff, all the funny efforts to exist of a man who had no clothes, no utensils save a can-opener and a rusty pot or two.

Fink came out and, looking Nelse over again, from wild hair and whiskers to flowered, voluminous tunic, he laughed harder. The Cajun grunted something, and the dog wagged his tail for the first time in weeks.

"Fink is going to kill me," Nelse thought. "That's why he laughs. Even the dog is on his side now. I'll not beg life of Fink. No."

Fink must have read his lowering eyes and scowling brow.

"Wild man, eh?" he jeered. "Wild man of the swamps. Well, you're going into them, Nelse. You drove me off this scow once. Now it's my turn. You start now—you walk straight out from these shells. The Norther has blown the water out of the grass, so you can go, maybe, a long way on it."

"You know better," said Nelse. "So does this native."

He looked at Lereau, who shifted the gun uneasily. Lereau had guided Fink in under a promise of reward if he kept his mouth shut whatever took place, but the trapper did not want murder done outright. Still, Lereau would never tell anything that would drag him into a mess.

"All right," said Fink. "Start now. If you don't I'll riddle your legs and let you kick around awhile. Then your arms; it will take hours for you to die out in this cold on the beach, but you will."

"See here," grunted Nelse, "cold is my friend. Cold and ice. I'd rather be anywhere than in sight of you. I'm asking nothing of you."

"Don't," rasped Fink. "All you'd get is the gun. Maybe I'll shoot anyhow when you get out there over a hole. But Lereau don't want you shot. He'd rather have the swamp take you as if an accident happened. That's the Cajun of it. So you go, Nelse."

Nelse looked at the bleak sky.

"Well, then, watch a man go who's not afraid. I'll take the chance."

He walked to the edge of the shells, a baggy, ridiculous figure waddling along. He knew it, and it hurt. One hell of a way for a sailor to die, thought Nelse, dragged under mud by women's finery. He saw the dog by the Cajun wagging his tail at last. That hurt also. He had tried to make that dog understand and had failed.

Nelse stepped out to the first grass hummock. Then another. It teetered on the thin mire upon which the great swamp top floated there, but Nelse tried to walk boldly, tranquilly. Two yards out his bare, tough feet sank slowly—slowly because the two days' Norther had lowered the water level under the cane, and the muck was stiffer. But there were pools and sloughs all about the *chênière* which no man could cross. Lereau knew it; he muttered, frightened. Nelse Radnor laughed. He'd show them how a man who loved frost could die if need be.

He did not look back. Fink would shoot presently when Nelse floundered

in a thinner spot that would suck him under when he fell. Fink hoped he would scream for help when the swamp took him.

The Cajun trapper, Lereau, would not look out to the cane. No man could walk this treacherous grass, cross the sloughs among the floating islands of wild hyacinths; in all the generations of swamp folk, no one had ever heard of a man who crossed this worst region of the delta country on foot. It was as impossible as walking on water.

Nelse came to a sheet of mire with thin, seedy pools upon it. No crossing this. He stepped to a grass hummock; another . . . He was doing better than one could expect. Then he heard Fink shout. The shotgun cracked. Lead cut the grass, whistled all about, struck the mud with little plops as when thick cream is stirred.

The Norseman went on carefully, upright, watching each foot sink, lifting it to test another tangle of cane roots. Then came the other barrel. Buckshot slithered closer. Nelse felt a gashing sting at his left wrist, another in his thigh.

"Go ahead, shoot," he grunted. "Damned poor shooting!"

He turned now and waved a bloody hand, grinning. Fink had his pistol out. But it was not good pistol range. He fired one shot, and then he and Lereau fell to arguing loudly about the shotgun.

When Fink hurried to the top of the barge with the gun Nelse was more than a hundred yards out, studying the ooze ahead. He had to go slowly around spots to stand upright at all, and Fink could continue using him as a target. The Cajun was protesting.

He told Fink to let Nelse alone—the swamp would swallow him shortly. No man could possibly cross from this *chênière!*

Fink fired again, one barrel, then the other. Nelse was not hit—but a man will cringe at shot cutting close to him. So, off balance, he fell.

FOR a moment he did not move. Then he felt his body sinking between hummocks. He could grasp the cane, but it merely pulled over, and the matted roots sucked down. Nelse looked up at the twilight. He was bleeding, but alive. Four doses of buckshot, and he was alive. Buckshot scatters too much. Fink had made a mistake. But Lereau was right. The swamp was surer death than a gun. It merely took longer.

"I got to keep moving," muttered Nelse, "crawl along somehow. For a time a man can keep up—till he gets tangled in a bad spot. But no bottom—it all goes down."

That silk dragged. Heavy mire folded it, and he slowly struggled from it, unrolled himself, grasped at broken cane. Once the swamp gripped his legs above the knees, and he had a bad time getting them above and leveled. The stars were out now as he lay panting, sweating despite the chill. There was no sound. The wind was dying. A bitter cold night for the Gulf Coast, but to a Northman nothing except discomfort. Nelse crept on, fighting to keep legs and arms free. Then he had a sudden idea.

That long swathe of wrinkled silk lay over the grass hummocks. If there was something to tie to? Well, there was. The stoutest cane clumps within reach. He took the cord that had bound his tunic and made fast the corners of the yard-wide silk. Then he straightened a ten-yard length of it and made the end fast. All that wallowing about had made a miry pool, water sucking over him, but now he could grasp the middle of his silk, put his weight over it.

"Like a big, long hammock," he thought, "or a parachute. It spreads weight over the grass mats. It won't hold forever though."

He lay in that cold seep of water over the stretched fabric, wondering about this. Morning? Suppose he could last till morning. He couldn't get out. Fink could hunt him down with the pirogue.

He grew drowsy and ached with the

cold. Once he knew frost was on the broken cane. That was a rare thing here, but the Northers did blow icy breath from the Texas country sometimes. Cold, but Nelse, somehow, found that sting delicious. He had longed for cold, hardy things. He didn't feel his buckshot wounds. The mud had stopped the bleeding. But Nelse had no problems of life or death now. He felt apathetic, looking up with heavy eyes at the glittering silence of stars. Once he drew his wounded wrist across his eyes, and the blood was crusty hard. Then he forgot about it.

When he did remember, it was because he threw out his arm in his stupor and it struck something hard. Hard as a board. It was startling. Nelse rolled with difficulty in his sheet of mire over the spot of silk his body had sunk. Then he gasped, dragged his head up to stare at a veil of dawn below the stars.

"That stuff is frozen," he muttered. "Ice, that's what; and the muck is hard. The water level is lowered by the wind, and now the top is solid!"

He fought free, crackling a thin ice sheet as he moved. He reached the unbroken cane hummocks and stood up on one, amazed. It trembled slightly, but it was locked to the next by frost. Nelse stepped out on it, then to another spot, boldly, upright!

He did not know this Gulf country, but Lereau would have said that not three times in his memory had the great Barataria swamps grown fixed with ice.

But Nelse, the Northman, stood up naked in the dawn. He laughed bewilderedly. His silk spread, partly sunk, partly on the stiff grass, had saved him through the night. He dragged it out from frozen pools and mud hummocks, rolled it in a crunching bundle and started northward, walking where no man's foot had trod before.

Thin ice was over the pools and sloughs, and he avoided them. Only the crust of humus about the grass hummocks was solid enough to bear a man's weight. But this was amazing; Nelse went on westward where he thought there would be open bays of real salt water.

He had made a good mile, his toughened feet getting sore from the frozen muck crust, but this touch of the north was wine to his soul. He could see the oaks of the *chênière* across the grass, but no sign of life was there. Then when another frozen lakelet barred his path he heard that dog barking. Then he saw the brute out on a patch of leveled cane.

"Of all the luck," muttered Nelse. "That fool never liked me, but now he's racing along full of joy. That's bad."

He looked ahead anxiously, then back. Nelse grew rigid. There was Fink half a mile away with the shotgun, coming silently. The Cajun, huddled from the cold in the scow, had been uneasy all night. But Fink had snarled back that the fugitive was dead. He had fired and seen him fall in the swamp last night. But this morning Lereau had called him to the barge roof.

"*Mais non*—there is the wild man. The frost saved him."

"I'll finish him," Fink had shouted, and shoved buckshot into his gun.

Lereau fled below; he would not witness this; no one could ever get him to say he knew anything about it. So Fink set off alone.

NELSE grew stolid with misery. He had faced hope with the sun, and now death was in sight. He had traveled west on a narrowing point of the sawgrass and cane among many pools and tiny lakelets that gave out to the bay, but he could not see the open water. There was no hiding place, no shelter from gunshots. Fink and the dog could hunt him down like a rabbit. But Nelse went along the thin ice sheets in a fierce resolve to keep moving to the last.

"He won't shoot till he gets close; he can take his time," thought Nelse, looking all around at the frost-sparkling marsh. "I fooled him last night, but he won't take another chance on that."

He kept on, well out of gunshot, but knowing that as he neared the saltier water of the bay morasses there would be no frost crust.

Fink did not shout; just came on as a man would trail a wounded buck. The dog followed now, aimlessly distrustful of this scamper on soil no dog had ever run upon before.

Nelse made another half mile and then knew that Fink had gained. Nelse picked his way, but Fink cut across unheedingly.

And suddenly the sailor stopped and looked down at his feet. He forgot the gun for a moment. The hummock soil was turning from frozen gray to a moist, oily black about the grass roots. Nelse flung his tangled hair back and stared at the sun.

"I forgot—" he muttered. "And Fink forgot. The wind southeast and the tides stealing back. Salt water under the grass, and the sun warming the crust!" He stared back at Fink. Did Fink know?

When Nelse made another hundred yards his foot broke through a splintery little hole in the muck. He went on slowly now; he had to go slowly. The great swamp was thawing, the salt water lifting the floating spaces of it again, trickling in the tiny sloughs.

Fink had come much closer now. Not a hundred yards away, but he stopped as suddenly as Nelse had done.

"Nelse!" he shouted, and there was swift fear in his tone. "See back of you! That stuff is getting soft!"

"Yes," called Nelse quietly. "You have come too far. What are you going to do now?"

Fink was staring down at his feet. Suddenly he yelled wildly.

"That damned sun! A mile back to the *chênière*—"

"You'll never get there. Yes, the sun."

Both men stood silent for a time. Nelse was slowly sinking in the frosty slush above his ankles, but he stood rigid, watching Fink. Some one would crack first under this strain. Here, under this clear, keen sky, the sun warm and friendly, the swamp smoking vapor moved by the faint breeze, the two men watched each other.

Fink muttered. He feared to move. He took off his coat and lowered it stealthily, got a foot on it. He took off his shell belt and slid it down. Heavy boots, the shotgun—he looked across at Nelse's stripped, pink body. Nelse had dropped his messy silk pack and stepped from one hummock to another as they sucked deeper.

Fink twisted desperately to stare at the distant *chênière*.

"Lereau!" he yelled. "Come get me out of this!"

"That Cajun—" Nelse smiled grimly —"he'll not stick his ears out in this cold. The dog's going back, Fink. Trust him to look out for himself."

Fink was whimpering oddly. Then he cursed. He lifted the gun and fired in the air. One barrel, the other. Then he stooped to his shell belt and loaded. But he couldn't get erect again. The sucking stuff had got his knees. He shrieked and fired the gun again, both barrels. Nelse could hardly see him in the cane.

Nelse did not want to. It is not good to see a man unnerved, howling in fear. All this noise set a great flock of wild ducks rising; they wheeled, a mighty flashing shield in the sky, the most beautiful sight of the hunter's morning. Nelse looked at them with longing—that triumphant freedom. Then he called quietly to Fink.

"Stop that cursing. That's no way to die."

Fink had the shotgun under his middle trying his weight on it. He had threshed a slimy pool about him while Nelse was stretched on slowly sinking root clumps. The sailor called again.

"Look here, you. I can't crawl to you across this muck, but maybe I can toss an end of this cloth to you. Silk, eh—Fink? Here!"

Nelse wadded his thirty-foot banner

up and tried to throw it. No use. The stiff, muddy stuff fell ten feet away. Nelse had merely driven his own body deeper; he was miring his own death hole. But he tried again. The silk fell less than halfway to Fink. Again Nelse shouted for another try.

No answer. Nelse got to his knees, then to his feet, with infinite caution till he could look through the yellow cane screen. He did not see Fink, but there was a grotesque cross in the ooze such as might be made by a man's legs and arms flung out. As Nelse stared the swamp's black lips convulsed over this shape as it vanished.

"He fainted from fright. Well, all right—"

Nelse looked up at the sun and smiled slightly. Frost was his friend, but that sun? He crept to the miry length of silk, spread it out and tested the stiffer grassroot mats. Warmer salt water was conquering the brackish seep from the river and the rains.

"Well," grumbled Nelse, "here I am, out on the end of a yardarm, but I'll trust that silk. It means life for a few hours more." He laughed stoutly. "Silk, eh? This is fine business for a man!"

That silly women's stuff had saved him last night. He could tie the ends of it to the cane and spread his man's weight again over yards of the swamp muck instead of a foot or so. Where his body stretched over it the band of silk sank, but it held enough so that Nelse could keep his head out.

"That Cajun will think Fink shot me, but all those shots will frighten him away. No help there. Lereau will pole away and never admit that he saw Fink or me. That's the Cajun of it."

So Nelse reasoned in the hours that passed. He did not risk getting to his feet even when he heard the distant bark of the dog. That dog, having done all the damage possible, got back to the scow and fled away in the pirogue with this swamper, who spoke Cajun.

Nelse Radnor set his teeth grimly, trying to believe that he was fairly comfortable, that his strength was holding out, which was not true. The sun warmed him a bit, but then it slanted to the West and the air chilled. There was much water in the swamp now, all about Nelse and his feeble hold on life, and it was this hunting tide that brought two pirogue runners in from the bay to see what those shots were about this morning. It took them hours; sunset was beginning when Nelse heard the creak of a pushpole. He shouted faintly.

Then presently two lanky-jawed Barataria muskrat trappers were staring down at him from their pirogues.

Sacred name! A naked man, a Yankee, laid out on a piece of muddy cloth in the swamp! This bad spot about the lost *chênière* where no hunter ever wished to go.

Perplexed, they lifted him carefully into one of the dugouts, and worked slowly back to the open bay. It was a job; they boasted about it excitedly when they reached a shrimp platform twelve miles westward on salt water.

The Chinese platform boss dosed Nelse with bad whisky and rolled him in hot blankets till a trade boat came up from Isle Grande on the coast. Nelse did not remember clearly till he heard the siren of an ocean steamer in the Mississippi; but after that he was able to walk off the bayou packet to the New Orleans ferry. He thanked the mystified boatmen, promised to pay for the clothes they lent him, and then went to see the agents of the lost *Galatis*.

He told them his story and advised how the silk might be salvaged by a canal cut for dugouts through the grass. But some things he did not discuss in detail even as he laughed about them.

Nelse was paid fifteen hundred dollars for his share in the recovery of that silk consignment, and the next day he was on a train for the Pacific Northwest. The passengers thought he was crazy when he suddenly yelled as he saw snow on the Cascades.

"Frost is my friend!" He laughed. "That's the stuff for a man!"

By GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

Author of "Memoirs of a Soldier of Fortune"

GOLD TEETH and THE MORNING STAR

I WAS sitting in the Military Casino of Constantinople, chatting about the old days with my brother officer of the German army, Colonel Osman. Sipping our thimblefuls of sirupy Turkish coffee and smoking cigarets, we somehow touched on the subject of some of the idiosyncrasies of soldiers we had known. It was then he told me the story of Captain Siagh.

Captain Siagh [said the colonel] was my aide-de-camp. A good soldier, too. And nothing unusual about him—until he opened his mouth. When he did that, you were struck by a blaze of glory; for the dear fellow had invested in a set of solid gold teeth, with a one-carat diamond sparkling in an upper incisor. Where he got them heaven only knows, but those teeth were his pride and joy. He treasured them, certainly, far above his life. And speaking of lives, those damnable teeth once brought a dozen men deep into the shadow of death.

It was about five months after we had declared war on Russia. An order had come down from our High Command which sent me, with Siagh and an escort of a dozen mounted gendarmes, plowing belly-deep through the snow-covered high plateaus of Armenia.

Three days of climbing the glacial walls of frozen precipices, stung by hurricanes of powdered ice, our bodies crusted with the frost of cruel diamonds, and we finally struck the trail over which Xenophon and his famous Ten Thousand trekked some twenty-five hundred years ago—across the snowy wastelands of the Caucasus. Our footsteps, though, were in the opposite direction.

Those desolate plateaus averaged in height from ten to twelve thousand feet. It was mid-winter. And what with losing our way in the frozen immensities; our pack-animals slipping and screaming down bottomless crevasses; the too frequent sight of wolf-

eaten remains of camels, horses and soldiers visible through the driving sheets of snow; nights of sleepless agony through which we forced ourselves to walk around the camp-fires to keep our blood from freezing—those Kurd-infested mountains were verily a devil's playground, a white, frozen, opaque roof of hell itself.

But through all the horrors of our waking nightmare, I was constantly aware of the chattering gold teeth of my adjutant. In time those teeth began to be more frightful to me than the shriek of the wind or the aching pain of the marrow in my bones.

When I could stand it no longer I would rein in my stallion and offer Siagh my flask.

"I shouldn't really accept, Beym," he would invariably protest. And just as invariably he would gulp down a four-finger peg.

The relief would be temporary. In fifteen minutes or half an hour those insane gold teeth would be clicking again like castanets gone mad.

Even the blizzard-swept range of the Thousand and One Lakes with its sheer sides glazed and its gaping crevasses lined with bottle-green ice couldn't take those teeth from my mind.

And we were getting into the country where we had to contend with men as well as with furious Nature. For the semi-savage Kurdish tribes had begun to amuse themselves by sniping at us. That, however, was to be endured; it was simply part of a soldier's job. Not so the teeth.

They played a ceaseless tattoo, and I prayed with whatever piety was in me that he might drop them in a crevasse or snowdrift and never find them again. But to him those teeth were his very life. Hadn't the *cocottes* of Paris been dazzled and enamored by them? Hadn't a famous *chanteuse* of the Folies Bergères thrown her arms around his neck one evening in front of everybody? Siagh would tell you himself how those golden grinders had won love and fame for him.

My own preoccupation with Siagh's dental treasure made me aware that our gendarmes, too, were taking more than passing interest in it. It didn't require any deep psychology for me to realize that our men were not moved by any spiritual passion in the matter, but were, rather, actuated by a purely material desire to possess Siagh's teeth for their cash value. It was not hard to guess that, if given the chance, the cut-throat Kurds might well mark him for their own. Therefore I suggested that he put his teeth in his pocket as we descended at last into the valley of Erzeroum.

"But, Beym—" Siagh protested, horrified at the idea—"I couldn't, by Allah! My face would collapse like a pricked penny balloon!"

I told him—and it was the truth—that the Kurds had a penchant for extracting gold-capped teeth from the mouths of captives, and even from the gums of passing travelers. That they esteemed them highly as beads and trinkets. But his vanity dominated any fear he might have had.

"Don't worry, Beym," he assured me. "These mountain goats have seen but one or two shining caps of which they couldn't be afraid. But a mouthful of gold will frighten them. It will be supernatural. You watch!"

I doubted it.

DURING the two days we spent in Erzeroum we were the center of attraction. But the people were dour. Only the gleam of Siagh's golden smile penetrated their apathy. Every *komitadji*, *gönöli* and Kurdish maiden in the town gazed at him spellbound. They clustered about him like bees around a honey-pot. The men sought him out to talk to. Several Armenian goldsmiths made special visits to him for the purpose of viewing the wonder.

Word spread that the teeth of gold in the mouth of our *effendi* grew there

by a miracle of nature—that the roof of his mouth was also gold! Afterward I learned that my valorous adjutant had himself carefully circulated the story. By the time we were ready to resume our journey to Armenia, Siagh almost believed his own legend.

"See, I was right, Beym," he exulted. "They were in awe of me all the time, as if I were of the blood of the Blessed Prophet!"

He was like a naive child, delighted at his own invention.

"But wait till we get among the wild Kurds," I cautioned. "The people of Erzeroum are civilized compared with them."

It made no impression on him.

As we headed south toward the savage Kurdistan and Armenian Urartu—the city of blood and tears—his golden telegraph resumed its shivering rataplan in my ears. And my flask responded, as usual, to his Morse code.

The night following our departure from Erzeroum we camped in a ravine full of briers, where the wolves howled an expectant dirge, their green eyes gleaming like phosphorescent needles in the darkness. Fire at them we dared not, for fear of notifying skulking Kurds of our position. We all were wakeful.

Toward morning, when the camp-fire had burned down too low for light, two of our gendarmes stealthily approached Siagh. The two hid their faces in the folds of their woolen *bashliks*. But the loot was not taken, because for the first time—in my knowledge—Siagh slept with his teeth in the hip pocket of his riding breeches. Who the foiled thieves were was never revealed, for the abortive effort resulted in a general mêlée of the entire escort, and I'm sure the scramble was prearranged in case of failure. Clearly, the whole twelve had plotted to share in the loot.

Siagh never mentioned the attempt at robbery in their presence. The men explained the hubbub by saying a wolf had gotten into the ravine.

"But you'd better give your teeth into my keeping each night hereafter," I warned Siagh. "I can not risk mutiny or murder, you know—even for your precious teeth."

He agreed.

At daybreak we beheld in the distance, silhouetted on the northern skyline, the majestic cone of the Bin-Göl-Dagh, or the Mountain of the Thousand and One Lakes, its white brow cold and threatening amid whirls of mist.

And that day I heard no click of gold teeth, though it was colder, if anything. Siagh had stopped advertising his valuables—and his thirst.

At nightfall we sighted a Kurdish village clinging to the mountainside like an eagle's aerie, its roofs of trodden earth slanting, one above the other, like terraces against the steep rock wall. As our trail passed through its main and only street, we decided to take a chance and ask the village headman to allow us to spend the night there.

The headman, Ishmail-Agha, turned out to be a veteran in the throat-cutting profession. That evening he presented to me, as one of the amenities of the occasion, an exquisitely silver-inlaid yataghan, razor-sharp, with which he assured me he used to perform public executions to save the village hangman the trouble.

But before being taken under the sheik's protection, we were received in the guise of hospitality by a committee of two or three hundred armed Kurdish warriors of the most villainous aspect it has ever been my misfortune to behold. They were deployed in battle array, and eyed us with disquieting interest, obviously making mental notes of any visible wealth or coveted trophy.

"For Allah's sake, keep your mouth shut," I whispered to Siagh in French, "or they will kill every one of us!"

Because his teeth had not chattered all day, I had forgotten about them until it was too late to get them out of sight.

"Don't say a word," I cautioned him

once more. "Be dumb or we are lost!"

I saw his lips tighten to a thin line, his pointed beard and mustache becoming a spade of black hair.

Into Sheik Ishmail-Agha's mud-hovel palace we went. The interior was surprisingly warm in spite of the intense cold outside. This was due to the animal heat given off by horses, sheep and cattle standing in the stalls which lined the circular wall of the room.

While our gendarmes were attending to our mounts in a corner of this audience-chamber-stable, barricading the animals and themselves, with their rifles in readiness, Siagh and I sat down, cross-legged, with our host and several of his notables around the hearth in the center of the room.

The fireplace was simply a hole in the ground filled with smoldering cakes of cattle-dung, the smoke and emanations from which caused the tears to course down our cheeks. I glanced at Siagh. He was having a hard time of it. Poor devil, he could not screw up his eyes to lessen the sting for fear of opening his mouth and disclosing his treasure. But he used his hands effectively, though I saw the Kurds watching him curiously. His silence and odd actions fascinated them.

ONCE used to the smoke and stench, we began surveying our primitive surroundings, and I noticed Siagh's eyes roving hither and thither. Suddenly I gasped.

Siagh Effendi was smiling radiantly from ear to ear!

I followed his glance. A lovely maiden of fifteen was staring at him, charmed to immobility. Then she fluttered like a dove and settled between her father and my grinning adjutant.

"Now that you've done it," I whispered in French, "you'd better take out those teeth and present them to the sheik before your throat is slit!"

But he was rapt in the vision of feminine loveliness.

"This is my daughter Haida, the ewe lamb," said Ishmail-Agha, his sharp black eyes riveted on the glittering smile of his guest.

"May I find favor in the sight of your Lordships?" breathed the damsel.

"Fairest of the fair!" sighed Siagh.

"Jackass of jackasses!" I groaned.

By that time all the men, women and brats assembled in the room had gathered about us, their faces lighted with amazement.

"Smile on your slave again," entreated Haida.

Held by her beauty, lost in her passionate black eyes lifted in timid adoration, Siagh smiled—oh, elegantly, splendidly.

"Never have mine eyes beheld such glory!" cried the sheik. "The honor to my house is great. In no other bed but mine must a guest so favored of Allah sleep this night!"

For a Kurd, the sheik was unusually polite in his approach to slaughter, I thought. I watched Siagh realize the import of the words. His smile vanished into his beard.

"Lord of the hills," he stuttered, "your lowly servant is too unworthy. Besides, I always sleep near my favorite stallion. It is a holy vow."

Under other circumstances I would have hooted with laughter, for Benni, his mount, hated Siagh and cheerfully would have kicked his brains out at the first opportunity.

It was then that Ishmail-Agha rose and presented me with the silvered yataghan and told me how he had employed it in two hundred and ten beheadings in his sixty years of chieftainship. This was an appropriate answer to Siagh and no less a gesture of his supreme might to me, the leader of this miserable contingent of wanderers.

Bowing my thanks to the veteran headman—in a double sense a headman now—I was aware that Haida spoke.

"Tell us, *usebashi effendi*," she whispered to Siagh, "were your parents also born with teeth of gold and a bright

morning star in their midst?"

Not waiting for him to answer her, and seizing upon what I considered the one strategy of the moment, I faced her father and exclaimed theatrically:

"Most noble sheik, thus Allah has willed it: Our *usebashi effendi*—may Allah grant him many years of life!—is a direct descendant of the pious Mullah Abd-Allah who helped the Prophet to mount his white ass when he started on his Holy Hegira; the reason why the Angel Gabriel, in reward for his pious deed, bestowed on the children and children's children of Mullah Abd-Allah the favor of being born to teeth of gold and a morning star from Paradise in their mouths, is so that all true Moslems should know the favorites of Allah and the Pegamber, *bismillah.*"

If I had gained any advantage at all in my play on superstition, I was anxious to clinch it. I continued:

"You saw, most noble sheik, how our *usebashi effendi* tried to conceal his great gift from you and your people when we first entered your hospitable village? No doubt you wondered why. Harken: because its dazzling sight often arouses the evil passions in men and women—the men crave the gold, the women crave the man. Two lusts are thus awakened. And woe to man or woman who so desires. It is written!"

But the sheik was skeptical.

"What happens to the man who craves the gold and the morning star, my learned guest?" he inquired smoothly.

"If he attempt violence or theft, it brings the plague of rotting flesh to his family, and fire to his house and worldly goods."

"And what happens to the woman whose heart goes out to the one under the protection of the Angel Gabriel?" asked Haida.

"If she love truly," I said, "her children receive the gift in their turn. If she love falsely, the golden teeth and golden star disappear until she is cast off by her husband, or dies!"

There was silence for a few moments, while the sheik and his subjects digested the message. Then Ishmail-Agha turned to Siagh.

"Is this true, by the beard of the Prophet?" he asked.

For a second I held my breath, not certain how much of a brother Moslem my apparently Occidentalized adjutant still was. But he said—

"The *miralai-bey* has spoken the truth!"

Evidently we had won for the moment. The sheik offered us personally the traditional thimblefuls of coffee, which assured us of inviolate hospitality. But, knowing the Kurds as I do, I was positive that Ishmail-Agha would move heaven and earth to find out if what I had said was truth.

AFTER supper, when our *narghiles* were bubbling and smoking, the sheik began a shrewd move. After solemnly gazing at the golden roof of Siagh's mouth, which convinced him more than anything else that the Mullah Abd-Allah story was a fact, he started to praise his daughter Haida in superlative terms, hinting that she was a pearl among women, and that she had fallen deeply in love with our *usebashi effendi.* Allah be praised if he could have a grandchild with teeth of gold and a sparkling morning star in their midst!

"But does our *usebashi effendi* love her?" I asked. "And does the fair Haida love him verily?"

Siagh almost missed the cue I sent him in a quick nod. He was charmed by the lovely girl, but he couldn't see himself marooned in these desolate mountains as the father of gold-toothed children and headman of a tribe of savages, as Ishmail-Agha intimated. But he obeyed my signal.

"I could love the fair maiden if she would love my shadow as she loves her father and mother, her kindred and her own life," declared Siagh modestly.

"Then let them be married this very

hour and sleep on the honorable couch tonight," I said.

Siagh was stunned. As the wily sheik clapped his hands with a grave countenance for general attention and shouted for his numerous entourage to prepare for the nuptials, I whispered an illuminating word to Siagh, in French, which caused him to grin the widest of golden grins.

The marriage and wild festivities followed. You would never have thought that we were in a frozen world thrust two miles into the sky. Our gendarmes didn't know what to make of it all, but they enjoyed to the full the music, the dancing, the feast.

Before the bride and bridegroom retired to their nuptial nest, Siagh drew Haida and her father aside and told them that he must bid his horse Benni a special farewell, because he had slept near the stallion since its colt days. Benni would understand . . . The horse-loving Kurds appreciated this tie between man and his four-footed friend.

WILD uproar came with the first streak of morning. In the night the golden teeth with the morning star in their midst had dissolved into nothingness!

"Haida has deceived me!" wailed Siagh through his sunken mouth. "I am accursed!"

"Allah have pity on me," cried the girl in her turn. "The Angel Gabriel came in the night and took back the glorious gift!"

I was properly astounded.

"Has the dreadful curse come to pass?" I asked the sheik, who stood frowning down on Haida kneeling before him, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"And my gold-toothed grandchildren!" grated Ishmail-Agha through his teeth. "So you didn't love him truly after all, you deceitful creature. Woe to thee!"

"My father, I did as you bade me to," wept Haida, "but I can never love a man with a cavern of shrunken gums."

"He shall die!" barked the sheik. Then, with craft uppermost, "Unless he produce the teeth of gold and the morning star and give them to me!"

I told Ishmail-Agha that if they killed the *usebashi effendi*, a worse fate would follow, that he now betrayed his cunning hand in lusting for the gift of the Angel Gabriel, and had foolishly sacrificed his daughter to his greed.

"Remember the punishment of rotting flesh and fire," I warned.

Though the hardened old sinner was really frightened, he gave the order to his fierce phalanx of cutthroats, lined up and ready to tear us to pieces, to search us and our belongings. He was taking no chances on the Angel Gabriel, or risking everything, as you might view it.

Stripped, turned almost inside out, every nook and cranny was explored by the Kurds, but the teeth of gold with the morning star had vanished.

At last, satisfied with his work, but growing more uneasy and fearful of the phenomenon, the sheik ordered that we be freed, though, as a last hostage to unseen powers, he commanded that Siagh bless him and pray for the clemency of Allah.

When Bin-Göl-Dagh lay miles behind and we were having a rest and a smoke, Siagh, struggling to munch a hard biscuit, said:

"Where are my teeth, Beym, that I gave you last night when I bade farewell to Benni?" His grin was a crumb-filled gap now.

"Tied in the knot of Benni's tail, *kardashim*," I answered. "A proper place for them until we reach our destination. *Allah Akbar! Allah Kerim!*"

THE WILD BOAR HUNT

By BORIS N. KAMYSHANSKY

ON ONE of my visits to Sultan Shamil of the Nogais, his son informed me that the annual wild boar hunt on the south shore of Lake Manych would take place the following day. I had no gun with me and was forced to assume the unwelcome rôle of onlooker.

I had noticed that among the white pigs of the Armenian mountaineers there always were a number of black animals. Their bristles are curly, their meat is lean and tough, and their heads are too big for them. They get their characteristics from their sires, the wild boars of Manych; and these characteristics make them practically valueless. Every Summer a great number of domestic sows are lured away by the wild boars into their swampy habitat, and either never return to domesticity, or on returning bring with them generous litters of worthless black sucklings.

A hunt is organized annually at the beginning of Summer by Sulton Shamil.

When, on the morning of my first day with Sultan Shamil, I came out of my *yoorta*, the sun was rising from behind the lake. The shore was thronged with about a hundred Russians, the majority of them with all kinds of hunting guns —fowling pieces, single and double barreled, and rifles of every type and make. Some twenty long and shallow boats were beached on the shore of the lake, and Nogais were standing by with punting poles waiting for their passengers. Men, unarmed or with fowling pieces, boarded the boats and were pushed off the shore, taking a course south-southeast. The remaining group of some fifteen riflemen were distributed by their elected leader among five camel carts and were driven south along the lake shore.

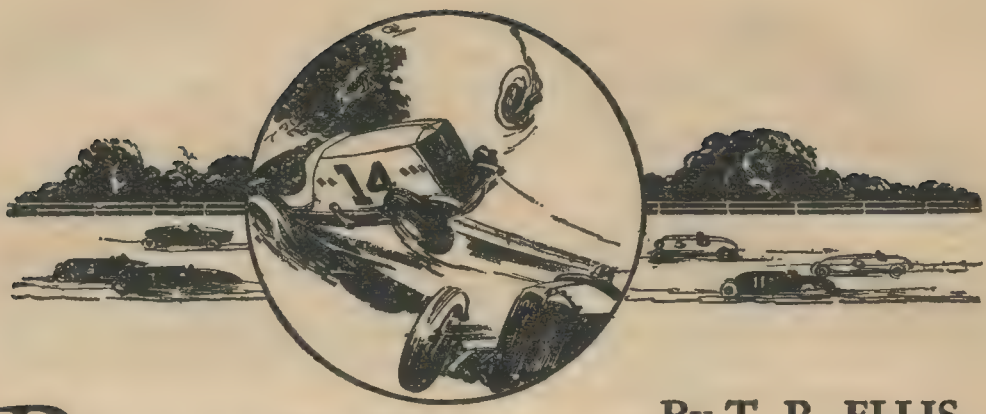
At last Sultan Shamil asked me to join him in his camel cart, and we followed the caravan of riflemen.

I could see the boats reach the edge of the reed grown shallows of the lake, then stretch out along that edge and finally disappear into the rivulets that flow from the Caucasian hills through the swamp into the lake proper. We drove farther on and stopped on a hillock which overlooked the narrow pasture between the swamp and the hilly shelf above it.

The riflemen had left their carts and were forming a scattered chain stretched along the hillock and facing the swamp. The boats could not be seen now, but their presence was soon disclosed by the crackling of shots in the thickets. Numerous shots sounded, and soon a veritable cannonade was heard in the swamp: The gunners were driving the boars from their dens. At the edge of the reed growth I saw dark shapes come out, retire again. Then more and more boars appeared in the pasture. They ran in every direction, but did not dare to turn back. The cannonade behind them persisted.

Finally a few boars advanced toward the riflemen, then broke into a gallop, followed by the whole herd. Now the rifles began to speak. Soon the pasture was strewn with the bodies of killed and wounded boars. A few survivors flew out of range. The riflemen moved forward to finish the animals that still showed signs of life, and then we returned to our carts.

The Armenians came from the villages. They would now skin and dress the hind parts of the carcasses—the only edible meat of the wild boar—and bring a number of hams as presents to the hunters, with a Karabach stallion for Sultan Shamil as their tribute to him for organizing the hunt.



RUBBER

By T. R. ELLIS
Author of "Fences"

ADMITTIN' freely, before this yarn picks up a lot o' revolutions, that there's plenty guys that're smarter than me at racin' automobiles, I still don't see how anybody could have doped out and sidestepped all the things that happen when me an' Smitty trek East to the big meet at Indianapolis.

To begin with, I wasn't keen about goin'; but Al De Gama, who first pops the idea at me, keeps right on tellin' me I'm a sap if I don't, and after awhile he gets me believin' it. Al, who's been kickin' race car throttles ever since Ben Hur won the Roman Derby, knows practically all there is to know about speedways, and ain't much given to loose talk. When I squawk, kinda weak-like, that our old 183-inch dirt-track Miller is no kinda mount for that kinda competition, he shuts me up by offerin' to put up half the money for a new race car, if I'll take Smitty East to drive it. At the end of the longest speech on record for him, Al says:

"Jerry, listen to reason. You know, and I know even better, that Smitty is probably the fastest pilot on the West Coast. Give the boy a break. Put a good car under him and take him where there's something to drive for. The Indianapolis course has always been a dirt track driver's paradise."

"Uh-huh," I growl. "It's been that for a lot of 'em. Paradise or wherever it is dead race drivers go. I'll think it over and let you know."

All this gabbin' takes place at Stockton in September, just after the last race of the season. On the first of the followin' May me an' Smitty are in Los Angeles, loadin' up a new, silver-colored, 220-inch Miller-four that's waybilled for the capital of the Hoosier State.

Early in the mornin' a week later I'm sittin' on the concrete pit wall of the Indianapolis Speedway. Smitty is standin' in front of me, tricked out in a white drivin' suit that makes his tall frame look slimmer than it naturally is, and bendin' a respectful ear to one of my usual pre-race lectures. He's a good-lookin' egg, this Frenchman. In fact, when I first met him, three years before, I thought he was too good-lookin' to be a race driver; but it didn't take me long to find out different. Behind him the silver body of the new race car shines like a million dollars in the mornin' sun. Smitty's wearin' a big grin that says he's kinda feelin' his oats, and his blue eyes are snappin' with a yen to try out

the new crate.

"Look, Smitty," I tell him. "I spent five different Decoration Days tryin' to knock off this so-called speed classic, back in the days when I was doin' my own chauffeurin', and the only classic thing about it was the wad of dough it cost me goin' back an' forth from here to the West Coast. Remember, there's been plenty of fast pilots that never won anything here because they didn't live long enough to collect it. Now you're just goin' out to wind up a little. Another Frog, named Leon Duray, holds the track record, and it's plenty high; so don't waste your time shootin' at it. Compree?"

"But, sure," he says, pattin' the big No. 27 on the tail of the car. "Just the little promenade. Yes?"

Coverin' up his black hair with a white helmet and slippin' his glasses into place, Smitty eases the car out on to the course. For awhile I just sit there and scuffle my feet on the concrete pit apron, gettin' used to the sound of our new motor as he cruises through a half dozen or so warmin'-up laps. About the time I begin to feel that kinda familiar, glad-to-be-back glow that hits you when you've been away a long time, I notice a short, chunky guy that's been standin' in front of me for a couple minutes. As I look up he says, sorta calm-like—

"Hello, Jerry Lewis."

Not bein' sure whether I oughta know him or not, I stick out a hand and say:

"Hi, there. Glad to see you again." But I'm lookin' up the stretch where Smitty's due to come outa the northwest turn.

The short guy takes my hand; then, with a yank that pulls me offa the pit wall, says:

"All right, Jerry, snap out of it. Act like you're glad to see me anyway." Then he grins, and I know him.

"Slip Duncan!" I howl. "Why, fella, I ain't seen you since—"

"Since you and me and Al De Gama were barnstormin' county fairs with race cars made outa tomato cans an' baling wire," he finishes.

After swappin' the usual number of punches we sit on the pit wall and pass a lotta small talk back an' forth to bridge the twelve-year gap. Lookin' at him as often as I can without starin', I notice his hair is gray as Al's, and there's a lot o' crinkles in the corners of his eyes that didn't come from laughin'. Rememberin' that Slip quit racin' to organize the Duncan Irontread Tire outfit, I start to ask him somethin' about it, then I happen to think I ain't heard much about Duncan tires lately and decide maybe I better not.

Meanwhile Smitty has been cruisin' by, and a couple black cars are pushed down to the pit line a little ways south of us. They're long, powerful lookin' crates, and, noticin' my curious look, Slip says:

"That's the Minotaur team. The tall guy gettin' in the No. 8 is Doc Hiles. He won the race here last year. Joe Catley drives the No. 14. Both of 'em are plenty fast."

After a bit they pull out on the track, and after clickin' off a few slow laps, proceed to wind the black cars up. Lap after lap they tear off, Hiles in the lead and Catley keepin' the 14 right on his tail, puttin' on the prettiest show of team drivin' I've seen for a long time.

DURIN' all this Smitty keeps pushin' our Miller around the loop at about seventy, tendin' strictly to his own business. But for some reason of their own the Minotaur team ain't gonna have it that way. About the tenth or twelfth round they catch up with Smitty on the front stretch and, as they go by, clip across the track so close to the Miller's front wheel that I bounce off the pit wall, cussin' black smoke. A dumber pilot than Smitty might've been scared into horsin' his wheel over and smackin' the retainin' wall.

Five or six laps later they do it again in nearly the same place, and I do some

more jumpin' up and down with cuss-words. It never occurs to me to call the Frenchman in, but it probably wouldn't have done any good, for as the Minotaur jobs blast into the south turn our Miller spits out a roar as Smitty takes after 'em. Comin' up the stretch on the next lap Smitty tears by 'em; clippin' just a little closer to the No. 3's front wheels than Hiles had to the Miller's. On the next round Smitty backs off his throttle and lets 'em pass, then on the followin' lap clips 'em again, cuttin' so close to the Minotaur that Hiles gets nervous and whips her over, missin' the left retainin' wall by a smell.

The roar of exhausts has pulled a few of the speed gang down from the garages to see what's goin' on, but the Minotaur team has enough and rolls in off the course. Then Smitty breaks loose and burns up the two and a half mile brick oval. Slip pulls out a stop-watch and times the next round, then shows it to me. A minute and fifteen seconds flat; which spells a hundred and twenty miles an hour on this track.

As he passes the next time I flag him in, and he waves and nods. While he's tourin' somewhere around the back stretch Hiles comes up, all indignant, and bellows—

"Say, Lewis, what th' hell does that guy—"

"Aw, shut up, Hiles!" I interrupt. "You ain't bad—you just smell bad. You go out an' try to put the fear o' the Lord into a man that's drivin' this track for the first time, then when you get the worst of it you wanta cry about it."

Unnoticed in the excitement, Smitty has slid the silver 27 to a stop. Now he steps in between me an' Hiles. Facin' the Minotaur pilot, the Frenchman is smilin', but his eyes are shootin' blue flame as he says real gentle:

"It is very droll, this fun we have. Yes? Maybe sometime you would like to play again and will call me, eh?"

Smitty's rockin' easy on the balls of his feet, and I know that if Hiles makes one funny move he's gonna have a wild-cat all over him. He don't though, and things quiet down again.

With Smitty drivin' the car, me an' Slip walk back toward the big corral enclosin' the four long rows of garages, known to race drivers the country over as Gasoline Alley. On the way he asks:

"Who is this boy Smith, Jerry? I never heard of him."

"Frenchman, named Jules Moreau. I hooked up with him about three years ago and started callin' him Smitty. He seemed to like it, and when he got naturalized last year he hung Smith on the tail end of his name to make it legal. He won the French Grand Prix five years ago and, barrin' none, he's the best, fastest and decentest speed chauffeur I've ever known."

Slip nods and says—

"He sure knows how to point a race car."

Gettin' near the gate to the garage enclosure, Slip stops me. His face is serious as he says—

"Jerry, I wonder if you remember that back in the old days I had a few chances to do you favors an' did 'em?"

"Sure I do," I tell him, wonderin' what it's all about. It ain't like Slip to remind a guy of past favors.

"Well, will you do something for me —something pretty tall?"

"You know I will, if I can. What is it?"

"Run this race on Duncan Irontread tires."

That catches me flatfooted, and while I'm tryin' to think of the right answer he goes on:

"I know everybody uses Globe Internationals on this course. But, Jerry, what did the Globe outfit ever do for you, personal? Did they ever double up with you in a four-bit flophouse? Did they ever split 'coffee-and' money with you after a long run of bad breaks? Did they ever tow your race car outa town for you to keep the sheriff from pastin' a plaster on it? I have.

"Not that you wouldn't have done as much for me, and not that you weren't welcome to all that and more. I wouldn't even mention it, Jerry, but Globe International's just about got me licked. The only thing that'll pull me an' my stockholders outa the hole is about a million dollars worth of advertising. We can't buy it, so the next best thing is to have Duncan rubber on the Indianapolis track."

"What good will that do," I ask, "if we don't win? There'll be forty fast automobiles in this race."

"You don't have to win to do me some good. If I can get 'em on the track this year, more drivers will use 'em next year, and eventually we'll get a winner. How many tires do you expect to change in this meet?"

"Why, everythin' even, the front ones should go the route, and allowin' for a tough race, I shouldn't change the left rear over once an' the right rear not more'n twice."

"Listen," he pleads. "I've spent plenty of the stockholders' money experimentin' on this piece of racin' rubber, and I know what it'll do. I'm tellin' you, you can run this 500 miles changin' nothin' but your right rear and that just one time." His voice soundin' kinda bitter, he adds, "I've tried two years to get our tire on this track and I haven't had a nibble. How about you?"

That puts it square up to me, and I'm in a tough spot. Slip has always been a regular guy, an' there's nothin' I'd like better than to be able to do something for him. But Al owns half the car, an' Smitty gets a third of the winnin's for drivin', and I ain't got no right to take a chance on their share. I explain all this to Slip, and at the end tell him:

"But I'll do this, Slip. You write to Al an' ask him an' I'll put it up to Smitty."

"I wrote to Al," he says, pullin' a letter outa his pocket, "as soon as I saw your names as owners in the entry list. Here's what he says."

I recognize Al's writing and, followin' Slip's finger, read the following:

> —glad to do it. You know race cars, Slip, and you should know rubber. If Smitty and Jerry will take a chance I will, and good luck to you.
>
> —AL

We walk on up to the garage and, after introducin' Slip, I explain to Smitty all about these Duncan doughnuts, addin' at the end—

"But, Smitty, it's your life that'll be ridin' on that rubber, so the final say is up to you."

The Frenchman studies a few minutes, then says with a kinda slow smile:

"But, Jerry, *mon vieux*, why do you waste the time to ask me? If I can do the service for a friend to you I am very glad."

Not trustin' himself to speak, Slip just shakes hands with us and drags out.

WITH the tire question all settled, Slip leaves for his plant in Cincinnati, promisin' to be back a week before the race. Me an' Smitty start doin' the thousand things that always need doin' to a race motor. We tear it down, make some change and put it together, then do it over; with only an occasional tryout run on the bricks to bust up the back-breakin' monotony of garage work.

The time passes easy-like. The stalls on either side of us fill up, and we're just a couple more speed nuts hikin' around Gasoline Alley. We eat most of our meals at Beale's lunch counter in the infield, just west of the garages, and while life in the Alley is no novelty to me, Smitty's perpetual grin says he's enjoyin' it in spite of the hard work.

New faces show up every day. Kids, takin' their first crack at the 500, with the dust of dirt tracks still on their coveralls. Board track pilots, walkin' around tryin' to high-hat youngsters they'll probably be miles in back of when the checkered flag lights. Mel Connelly, champion of the Northwest, comes in from Portland with a front-drive Miller-

8. Tommy Kettle, speed king of the East Coast, brings a Duesenberg. Eddie Carlysle, holder of the track record at Robey, arrives from Chicago with the Carlysle Special. Several Boyle-valve jobs and two foreign entries are listed.

At the end of the north row of garages the Globe International Tire Corporation opens up their shop and starts dealin' out racin' cords to any an' all comers.

A couple days later me an' Smitty are timin' a camshaft and have the doors closed to keep the dust out. All of a sudden one of 'em is yanked open and a big, important soundin' guy booms:

"All right, you fellas. How many tires an' what size?"

He's got Globe International in big letters on his coveralls. Lookin' at 'im steady for a couple seconds, I ask—

"Say, homely, when you was little didn't nobody ever learn ya about knockin' on doors before pullin' 'em open?"

Does that hold him? Hardly any.

"Lewis," he says, "do you want any of these tires or not. I haven't much time."

"I do not," I yelp, "an' you're right about the time. You got just enough to get outa that door before I bounce this camshaft offa your thick skull." And he takes my word for it.

It ain't long then till another guy, wearin' the same sign, comes around. This one uses a little more sense, but I still have a tough time convincin' him I don't want any Globe tires.

The followin' afternoon me an' Smitty are loafin' in front of our stall when a tall, crusty-lookin' old gent comes up. He gives the race car a long once-over, then hands me a slow up-an'-down. I'm gettin' kinda uncomfortable under his glare and begin to wonder what crimes I've committed lately, when he says—

"You're Lewis!" He ain't askin' no question—he's tellin' me. I guess I look guilty, for he snaps, "I'm J. B. Carson, president of Globe International."

The way he says it invites argument, an' me bein' pretty well cooked up on Globe International by now, he gets it.

"O.K, President Carson, I'm all impressed. What of it?"

Passin' out a double dose of the same glare, he answers question with question—

"Lewis, what's the trouble between you and Globe International tires?"

"Nothin'. I don't owe 'em a dime an' I wouldn't put Globe rubber on my wife's tea cart. We're runnin' on Duncan Irontreads."

"Did it ever occur to you that you owe it to the safety of the other drivers to use the best tires available?"

"Uh-huh," I grunt. "That's what I figured."

He lets that one slide an' asks:

"What about the safety of your own pilot? What does he think of running the hardest race in the world on unknown tires?"

Grinnin' a little, Smitty answers for himself:

"Me? I don't think! For three years now Jerry Lewis has think for this team while I drive the race car. M'sieu, it is the most excellent arrangement."

Tossin' us a sorta sarcastic nod then, Carson says—

"Gentlemen, I hope you don't regret your decision."

He hikes down the line, stiff as a new motor. Lookin' after him, I get a feelin' that for all my tryin' to wisecrack, I've finished second in this argument, and say to Smitty:

"That's only the first verse of that song. We'll be hearin' the chorus." Then, answerin' his blank look, I add, "Grief!"

"The grief?" Smitty shrugs. "Pouf! We have had it before."

Dumb-like, I try to shrug it off the way the Frenchman does, and for a day or so get away with it. But it ain't long till the whole damn speedway starts fallin' around my ears, an' if Al De Gama hadn't stepped in to prop it up, I'd probably be in the booby-hatch right

now, pickin' at the cell paddin'.

ONE afternoon about a week later me an' Smitty are fussin' around the car when I hear somebody in the next stall askin' for me. Poppin' to the door, I'm met by a big husky egg wearin' a red-an'-gold armband that says he is a Contest Board Official of the A.A.A.

Without cockin' his gun, he cuts loose both barrels:

"Lewis, I'm Alton of the Contest Board. You will either have to get another driver for your car or scratch your entry."

My mouth flies open, and before I can close it again he continues:

"There has been a protest that your pilot, Smith, is driving under an assumed name. He is registered with the Automobile Club of France and quite well known there as Jules Moreau."

"Say," I yell, "are you nuts? This man was naturalized last year, an' the judge that made him an American citizen said that from then on his name was legally Smith."

"That doesn't alter the case. He drove under the name of Smith before he was naturalized, and as far as the Three-A is concerned he's Jules Moreau. You'll find the regulation in Rule 214, Page 62 of the Official Competition Rules."

He turns on his heel, an' I dive for 'im, but Smitty grabs me. His face is white an' his eyes are full of misery, but he squeezes out a tortured grin an' says:

"Easy, *mon ami!* Maybe, for just the little excuse, they will also rule your car out. *Non?*"

Leavin' Smitty at the garage, I spend the balance of the afternoon gallopin' from one Three-A official to another. They all listen patient an' sympathetic, but they all give practically the same answer, which is that Fred Alton is secretary of the Contest Board and whatever he says about the rule book is law.

About three o'clock I drag back to the Alley. Smitty is sittin' on a box in front of our stall, lookin' across the infield at nothin', an' can't even answer when I speak to him. Durin' the evenin' I think things over careful, lookin' for a possible out, an' finally do the only thing left to do—wire Al.

The next mornin' Smitty don't feel up to goin' to the track with me, an', knowin' what a wallop he's been handed, I ain't surprised. Early in the afternoon I lock up the garage and beat it back to the room, thinkin' maybe I can cheer him up some. One look around, though, an' it's me that needs the stimulant. Smitty is gone! The first couple hours I'm kinda dazed, then I pull up thinkin' that if, after bunkin' together for three years, he don't think enough of me to let me help pack his load, it's O.K. with me; I'll get along. But I'm just kiddin' myself and know I'm gonna miss him like hell.

QUALIFYIN' starts on the twenty-first, and I spend a few bad days mopin' between the garage an' the pits, takin' an occasional kick at the front tires of the Miller and not even answerin' civil to guys that speak to me. Every roar from the track makes the gloom thicker and increases my yen to see Smitty out there behind the wheel of the No. 27.

Things begin to break on the twenty-sixth. Al an' Slip Duncan arrive at the track within an hour of each other. Al razzes me about my long face and tries to kid me outa it. Slip brings a supply of racin' cords and an intelligent-lookin' little Irishman, named Mickey Malloy, who's to be our ridin' mechanic.

Right away I round 'em up in our garage and unload my sob story. Tellin' about the Globe men an' J. B. Carson, a whistle from Slip interrupts.

"Sufferin' wheel spokes!" he groans. "Do you have to be that tough?"

"I wasn't tough," I tell him, "but if he owns all the jumpin' beans in Mexico, that don't make me salute 'im."

"That's all right, Jerry, but nobody spits in J. B's eye without gettin'

splashed. That old herring is plenty salty, and don't forget it. More than that, he's a bang-up fightin' man."

"Yeah?" I snap, thinkin' of Smitty. "Well, I don't like the way he fights." Finishin' my yarn, everybody's quiet till Slip spreads his hands, faces me an' says:

"Everybody in the world knows that eighty per cent of the dough in Minotaur Motors is Carson money. Start from there and figure out your own answer."

It doesn't take me long to react to that statement—

"An' I can thank him for gettin' Smitty bumped, huh?"

Slip looks at me in a calm and knowing way.

"Nothin' so crude as that. He wouldn't even tell Hiles to do it. But Hiles is smart enough to file a protest on his own hook, knowin' it would eliminate some tough competition, and also knowin' he'll get a nice bonus from Carson if one of the Minotaur cars carries Globe rubber under the first checker."

"Well, what're we supposed to do? Fold up an' thumb our way back to the West Coast?"

Slip studies awhile, then answers:

"There's two things you can do. One of 'em is make up with J. B. and run on Globe tires.

"In which case he'll go to the front for you and get Smitty reinstated. He's got a lotta drag with the Three-A. If you wanta do that, it's O.K. with me. I ain't askin' you to help me if it's gonna cut your throat to do it. I've hauled unused tires back to Cincinnati before, an' there'll be other years."

"What else?"

"Let Al drive the race on Duncan tires. With all respect to your sidekick Smitty, you know Al is no punk in this racket."

Me an' Slip an' Mickey look at Al, who says—

"We've taken a hand on Slip's deal, Jerry, and I move we play it out till the checker lights—even if it hits us in last place."

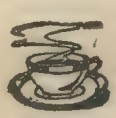
ANY idea that Al's four years' absence from Indianapolis had made the speed gang forget him would have choked to death in the dust kicked up by visitors around our stall. Durin' the afternoon of our conference the word gets around that Al's takin' another shot at the 500, an' every chauffeur on the lot, except the Minotaur team, calls on him to wish him luck. To them his gray hair doesn't suggest age so much as it does sixteen years of racin' automobiles and givin' lots of fast pilots a good view of his back.

Bein' back at the big loop is doin' things to Al, too. A whole flock of his forty-two years go into hidin' an' once more he's the great De Gama of the old days—the guy who used to take race cars under the checkered flag or through a fence with the same smile.

The next day Al drills the Miller through the ten-mile qualifyin' trial, in five minutes and four seconds, for an average of 118.4. When the final list is posted on the evening of the twenty-eighth, we're third; Hiles's No. 3 and Connelly in the No. 7 front-drive job havin' turned it faster. Third on the qualifyin' list gives us the outside position in the front row of the startin' line-up and leaves us plenty satisfied. Goin' to town that night, when I've been quiet long enough for it to be noticeable, Al asks—

"What's on your mind, Jerry?"

"Smitty," I tell him. "I was just wonderin' where he is an' if he's got enough jack to eat on."



JUST as the sun takes its startin' flag on the mornin' of race day me an' Slip are inhalin' coffee at the track lunch counter. We've spent most of the night counterbalancin' tire valves and, though both of us are old enough to know better, we're as hopped up over the Miller as we were over the first race car we ever put together.

At seven o'clock Al an' Mickey show

up, an' by nine we've moved everything from the garage to the pit, checked over pit signals an' mapped out plans for the day. Bein' some worried over the fact that we have no relief driver, I mention it to Al, who answers:

"Don't let it bother you, Jerry. If I need relief at all it'll be after the halfway mark. By then there'll be plenty of good pilots out of the race that'll jump at a chance to get back in."

Then the line-up is called out, an' we shove the Miller into our front row position. Al an' Mickey get aboard an' check over helmets and glasses while me an' Slip wander aimless-like around the car, lookin' at watches and wishin' we had something else to do. Connelly's No. 7 front-drive has the pole, and the No. 3 Minotaur is in the middle. On one of my trips between the two cars I hear Hiles say somethin' to his mac about "makin' monkeys outa that has-been quartet." While I'm tryin' to think of somethin' tough to say back, the fifteen-minute bomb cracks. I jump an' swear, an' Hiles laughs.

As the pace-makin' car goes to the front, I look back over the field, and all the confidence I've been buildin' up for days begins to ooze. In the fifth row Bert Mozier's in a black Duesenberg that's carryin' the big No. 1 of the national speed champion. Tommy Kettle's red No. 5 Duesy an' the blue No. 9 Carlysle Special are holdin' pole positions in the seventh an' eighth rows. Three Boyle-valve jobs, a Peugot, Renault an' a Sunbeam are scattered through the layout of forty cars that've all qualified at well over a hundred.

Behind every wheel is a driver that's raced plenty miles on plenty tracks before he ever saw this one—an' just to keep 'em movin', any car that goes into the lead gets a hundred bucks a lap for every lap it stays there.

Then it's ten o'clock straight up an' the startin' bomb pops. I flip the Miller's crank an' she kicks off on the first try. The head starter waves a highball. The pace-maker starts rollin'. Racin' motors blast into life. A hundred thousand speed fans cheer.

Me an' Slip get back to our pit as the tail end of the line goes outa sight in the south turn. In a couple minutes the pace-maker leads 'em outa the north curve at about seventy. The three-abreast lineup has jumbled a little, an' we watch the starter's tower. The green flag flutters. The pace-makin' car swings into the clear an' stops. Throttles buttoned down, forty race cars smear into the first turn, sendin' up a roar that'd make machine guns sound like cap pistols.

With the snap of the flag Connelly jumps the No. 7 to the front and takes the first turn; Al cuts in ahead of Hiles and somewhere on the back stretch jockeys the Miller past Connelly, to lead the pack over the line an' into the second lap with the No. 7 right on his tail. A green No. 16 car has come up from nowhere and nosed in ahead of the No. 3 Minotaur. Bert Mozier is findin' holes in the jam and sendin' his black No. 1 rocketin' through. For awhile me an' Slip line up against the pit wall, our chins jerkin' together, right to left, as cars tear by, an' cinch up our nerves to meet the next five hours.

Durin' the first ten laps positions don't change much. Al increases his lead a little and, enterin' the eleventh, sends the Miller up the front like a silver streak to cross the wire six seconds to the good. Then the loudspeakers announce:

"Car No. 27, driven by the veteran Al De Gama, has finished the first twenty-five miles in thirteen minutes and twenty-seven seconds. An average of one hundred and twelve miles an hour and a track record for the distance."

Slip grins.

"Poor, broken down, old man," he says. "Too bad he can't drive any more."

"That's a thousand bucks worth of laps, too," I tell him. "An' it ain't the principle o' the thing I'm thinkin' about,

either. It's the money."

On the board the lap numbers climb an' the bright colored speed wagons spread around the loop until the course looks like a merry-go-round; a kinda big one, some faster than average. Race crews an' cars seem to 've caught their second wind, and with Al out in front an' goin' good, me an' Slip get a chance to rest a little—but not much. Finishin' the thirty-second lap, Connelly's 7-car is leadin' and Al passes in fourth place, holdin' up three fingers to tell us he's runnin' on that many cylinders, an' will be in the next round.

"Plug!" grunts Slip, an' we lay out plug wrenches an' hop the pit wall to wait for him.

We have the bonnet up before the car stops and find Slip's right. In fifty-four seconds they're gone again, runnin' on all four barrels, but they've dropped to ninth, nearly a lap in the hole.

At fifty laps the No. 7 is still leadin', but the green 16 is pushin' Connelly hard. An eighth of a lap back Mozier's No. 1 is third with Hiles in the No. 3 Minotaur right behind him. Several cars in a bunch are scrappin' for fifth. Catley's 14-Minotaur havin' a slight edge. The rest blast by in twos an' threes, the last of 'em hardly outa sight in the south turn till the head-enders are comin' up the stretch again.

Round after round rolls under hot tires, an' the air shakes to the moanin' beat of motors. The hundred-and-fifty-mile mark comes an' goes, with the leaders still settin' a dizzy pace, but the average has dropped to 109.4. More an' more cars stop at the pits. A few to go back into the rackin' grind after a few seconds, but in that first hundred an' fifty miles sixteen of 'em have traveled the short route from pit to garage—all through, and that means through for a year on this track.

As the seventy-eighth lap marker is hung up I get gas an' oil ready, while Slip signals Al that we're waitin' for him whenever he wants to stop. On the eighty-first Mickey signals back as the 27 roars by an', finishin' the next circuit, the Miller slides to a stop, not overrunnin' the pit an inch.

I dump in the gas, while Slip pours the oil, then we both take a quick look at the tires. They're showin' signs of wear, but there's plenty of tread left and Slip looks well satisfied as he O. K's 'em. Twistin' around in his seat, Mickey Malloy grins at me through the oil and dirt on his face.

"How's she goin', Mick?" I shout.

"Swell ride," he yells back.

JAMES STEVENS, the distinguished author of such great books as "Paul Bunyan" and "Brawnyman" is back with us again! In the next issue we have for you his new story, "Cap'n Damnable." A tale of the lumber bullies, of course, and the rip-roaring, wide open, swashbuckling days of early Seattle. But chiefly it's about a lovable old-timer who set out to clean up a wild and woolly town with his own two fists. . .

If you want to read James Stevens at his best, don't miss the next issue!

FORTY-NINE seconds puts 'em back in the runnin'—away back. Enterin' the eighty-fourth lap, the scoreboard has the 27 posted in twelfth place, an' all we can do is wait for the breaks and hope our motor stays together. One at a time then the leaders are forced into the pits for gas, oil an' rubber, an'

this, hooked up with Al's heavy throttle foot, moves the Miller up to sixth place at two hundred and fifty miles. But sixth ain't as close as it sounds. The 27 is over two miles back of the front end.

Connelly's 7 an' the green 16-car are still leadin', with about four seconds between 'em. A half-lap to the rear Mozier's No. 1 is holdin' third, an' Hiles and Catley in the two Minotaurs still fourth and fifth with less than fifty feet separatin' 'em. Neither of the first two are showin' any sign of lettin' up on their space-killin' speed, and as they rip by on the hundred an' tenth Slip shakes his head an' says—

"They can't keep that up forever."

Even as he says it Connelly stops the No. 7 two pits south of us, and the driver of the 16-car takes the cheers of the crowd into first place with him. Connelly changes both back wheels, and takes on gas, oil an' water in a little over a minute, but when his pit crew tries to start him again old man Jinx gets 'em. Four times they back the car up and try a push-off, gettin' no answer from the power plant. The fifth time she takes and roars back into competition, but they've lost over four valuable minutes, and Connelly is runnin' eighth, three cars and twenty seconds back of Al.

Meanwhile the driver of the 16-car is makin' the most of his lead and clickin' off hundred-dollar laps, but he don't get many. Enterin' the hundred an' twentieth lap Mozier's No. 1 burns up the straightaway at the head of the pack, and me an' Slip look at each other. The green car is missin'! Then the ambulance siren screams over the roar of motors. The loudspeakers buzz a second, then blare—

"Car No. 16 is on the retaining wall in the northeast turn."

We hold our breath awhile, waitin' for more announcements, but they don't come, an' we heave a sigh of relief. Everybody's got by without smackin' the wreck. Things settle down again and the race snaps up.

As three hundred miles hits the scoreboard Al is in fourth place, holdin' the 27 right behind the two Minotaurs. The three of 'em are about forty-five seconds back of Mozier. For ten laps he stays there, then, without warnin', boots the Miller past the No. 14 before Catley knows what's goin' on. Closin' up on the No. 3, Hiles spots him an' signals Catley, and I stiffen against the pit wall.

With Al in between the Minotaur pair he's standin' a good chance of bein' boxed, and maybe, somewhere on the back stretch, bein' sent into the wall. For a lap or two it looks like they're tryin' it, but it don't take. Al is chasin' the No. 3 down the stretches so fast that both of 'em are pullin' away from Catley. This boxin' thing won't go for sour apples if you can't keep up with the guy that's bein' boxed. With a faster pilot in the 14-car, though, it might'a' worked.

When the hundred and thirty-second lap marker goes up Al takes the Miller past the No. 3 Minotaur and into second. For three hours an' ten minutes now these speed merchants have been poundin' their mounts an' the strain is beginnin' to tell on men an' motors. Only fifteen cars are left, the last one bein' some twelve miles outa the lead. Several throttle trampin' pilots have been in our pit askin' if Al wants relief, and while I've been expectin' it, he hasn't asked for it. Of the foreign entries only the Peugot is left, and while I'm checkin' up Connelly's No. 7 gives up the struggle and coasts in.

Two laps later Al an' the silver Miller fall heir to the lead again as Mozier stops the No. 1 at his pit, a white line of fabric showin' through both rear treads. As the 27 sizzles up the front on the next round a wild cheer from the stands shows the speed fans haven't forgot the great De Gama, and Al lifts a hand from the wheel to wave his thanks. Another yell from the stands, not so loud this time, and we see the

black tail of the No. 1 disappear in the south turn, and Mozier's back in the race.

Durin' the next few rounds Al's lead increases a little, then as three hundred an' fifty miles go by, it takes a big jump. Hiles brings in the No. 3, right rear flat an' smokin'. The Minotaur pit makes a fast change, and Hiles goes back in the race still in second place, but nearly a full lap back of the 27 and just a few seconds ahead of Mozier.

With an open course in front of him now, Al has the Miller revvin' up to the whinin' wail that means miles per hour, and is gainin' every second he can before pullin' in for his last stop. Finishin' the hundred an' forty-second lap, I hold up the slate as he goes by and Slip picks out a right rear spare wheel. Two more circuits, and the Miller screeches to a stop in front of us. While I'm gassin' the tank Slip rolls the wheel out, but, as he's stickin' the jack under the rear end a yell from Al stops him.

"Don't change that, Slip!"

Slip hesitates.

"Pretty thin, Al. Better play it safe."

Al shakes his head, insistent, and looks at me.

"Let's gamble on it. If we can win on one set we'll tell the world Duncan Irontread makes a tire."

Too excited to speak, I just nod an' cinch on the gas cap. But Slip is worried and says—

"It's too long—" Then he stops and, lookin' hard at Mickey Malloy, yells:

"Get outa there, Mickey. I'll ride the rest of the way. I'm your boss, an' that's an order."

"Go to hell, boss!" says Mickey, distinct; and, pokin' Al's ribs, adds, "Swell ride; let's go!"

BACK in the runnin', Al is third, behind the black No. 1, but right away he changes that and in the next ten miles passes Mozier and starts closin' up on Hiles. Endin' the hundred and fifty-first lap, Catley brings in the 14-Minotaur. A little while later it's back on the track and, lookin' up as it streaks by, I straighten and stare. The No. 14 is in the hands of a relief pilot, a driver without helmet or coveralls—just a pair of goggles strapped over black hair.

"Slip," I howl, "watch that 14-car!"

It flashes by again, and Slip says—

"That's Smitty—and nobody else!"

For several minutes then I ain't sure whether I wanta cuss a blue streak or just bawl. I got a all-gone feelin' in my stomach and wander dumb-like back and forth across the pit mutterin'—

"Doublecrossed! Doublecrossed!"

Kinda dim, I hear some one callin' my name and find a short, slender guy, wearin' a Three-A armband standin' in the entrance to our pit. He says:

"Lewis, down at the Minotaur pit a few minutes ago a driver named Smith told me to tell you he was going in to drive relief for Catley in the No. 14 Minotaur."

Then I blow up! For two or three laps I tell the Three-A guy what I think of a lousy outfit that'd bar a driver outa one man's car then let him pilot another. When I'm all through the little man says, calm-like:

"Lewis, you're crazy! I'm Fred Alton, secretary of the Contest Board, and I never saw you before in my life!"

"What?" I yelp.

He repeats it, addin':

"Your own common sense should have told you the Three-A wouldn't bar a man on an excuse as flimsy as that. Some one's gotten hold of an armband and pulled a fast one on you. Do you want to file a protest?"

"No," I tell him, feelin' a little sick. "It don't matter. Let it go."

I turn back to the track. Cleanin' the slate, I print in big letters: "Watch Smitty—No. 14," and hold it up as the Miller flies by. The next lap I hold it up again, and Al an' Mickey look at it, then at each other. The followin' trip by they both nod, an' Mickey waves. The 14-car is sixth, but the Frenchman is drivin' like a cyclone and won't be

sixth for long.

Al moves up until less than a car-length separates the Minotaur No. 3 and the nose of the Miller, but Smitty ain't sleepin' neither. On the scoreboard the No. 14's card is jumped from sixth to fifth, then to fourth; and as the two leaders round out four hundred miles, Smitty is takin' the No. 14 past Mozier's No. 1 and into third place, a quarter of a lap behind Al. The loudspeakers do more loudspeakin'. The time is announced as three hours an' forty minutes and the speed average drops to 104.4.

Four hundred an' twenty-five miles go by the board, and the 27 passes with Mickey lookin' back at the No. 14 and shoutin' in Al's ear. On the next circuit our Miller snarls up the straightaway, passes the No. 3 like it's anchored, and takes the lead for the third time. Hiles is pourin' all he's got to the Minotaur, but it ain't enough. Then Smitty jockeys the other Minotaur alongside the No. 3 and gets a signal from Hiles. Smitty's car shoots into second place, and with the No. 3 ridin' in its draft, bears down on Al. Turnin' to Slip, I groan:

"Show's over. They'll box him this time, sure as hell! Slip, I'd 've murdered the guy that'd said Smitty would do this to me."

When Al crosses the wire the hundred and eightieth time, Smitty, drivin' like the mill tails of hell, closes to within a few feet of the silver Miller. The next lap he's still there, and for two more laps he stays there. Slow-like, then, I begin to get it. The only man on the track that *can* pass Al ain't doin' it!

For the first time since the start of the race I feel like laughin', and a couple motor blocks are lifted offa my back. This time it ain't the money, either; it's the principle.

It ain't long till Hiles realizes that somethin's slipped, and as Smitty's mechanic looks back Hiles is makin' frantic motions. The mac is shoutin' in Smitty's ear as they pass the next time, but the Frenchman is shakin' his head. Jammin' his throttle, Hiles pulls out to the right, tryin' to pass, but Smitty whips the 14 over, too, and the No. 3 is blocked. Then Al an' the 27 seem to jump away from both of 'em, and Smitty, usin' just enough speed to stay ahead of the No. 3, watches 'em go.

Twice, passin' the starter's tower, Smitty gets the orange an' black flag, tellin' him to give way and let the man in back go by. The second time the flag is flashed Al has nearly a quarter-lap lead, and Smitty takes the warnin' and pulls over to the pole. Then Hiles goes wild!

Chargin' up the straightaway on the next round, the No. 3 is nearly a car-length in front of Smitty. Goin' into the south turn, Hiles throws his car in a quick slide to the right, then, straightenin' out, slides the rear end down the bank to clip the right front wheel of the 14, and Smitty is hubbed!

With a sickenin' smash, the 14 hits the lower wall, bounces out an' goes to the top of the bank backward. Comin' down in a wide spin, it smacks the lower wall again an' stops, headed the wrong way of the track.

Forgettin' there's a race goin' on, I hop the fence an' start down the straightaway, only to get nailed by a couple track guards an' towed back to my stall. All I can do is stand stiff an' wait. After what seems an hour, far down in the turn a figure climbs the wall an' waves. The loudspeakers wind up an' cut loose:

"The No. 14 Minotaur hit the wall at the southwest turn. The driver and mechanic are uninjured." A little pause, then another announcement, "The driver of the No. 3 Minotaur has been disqualified."

MEANWHILE Al has the No. 27 thunderin' the stretches an' whinin' through the turns. The second place car, Mozier's No. 1, is over a mile back. With Smitty all right and thinkin' the race is on ice,

I'm feelin' kinda cocky, till Slip snaps:

"Don't look so damn satisfied. He's got six laps yet, an' that back wheel ain't carryin' enough rubber to make a good eraser."

The Miller goes by again an' again, with that threatenin' white line on the right rear wheel gettin' wider 'n wider. A hand is dropped on my shoulder, an' Smitty's beside me, but stops any questions by sayin'—

"Let it wait, *mon ami*, let it wait."

Without speakin' then, the three of us watch the 27 finish the hundred an' ninety-sixth, ninety-seventh an' ninety-eighth laps. Another round, and the blue flag is snapped over the silver bonnet. Wheelin' outa the north turn the next time, Al an' Mickey are greeted by a roar from the stands.

Al tours the extra lap slow and stops near the south end of the pit line. Me an' Smitty an' Slip push the car with Al an' Mickey still in it back to the garage and close the doors.

A few questions gets Smitty's story with most of it smoothed over. He'd intended to stay away until after the meet, so me an' Al would feel free to do what we thought best. The day before the race, though, the pull of the track gets too strong. Smitty comes out to hunt up the Three-A secretary, hopin' against hope somethin' can be done that'll put him back in the seat of the Miller. Inquirin' around the officials' stand, the secretary is pointed out, and Smitty, as he puts it, "have stop still in the tracks—it is not the man."

Smitty retires to do some fast thinkin'. After awhile he gets back into circulation, an' durin' the course of the day finds out that Globe International an' Minotaur Motors are one an' the same outfit.

"From there," he says, "she is—how you say?—the cinch."

"Oh, sure," I growl, sarcastic, "nothin' to it. You just go up to Hiles an' he kisses you on the brow an' says, 'Here, take the No. 14 an' help your friend win.' "

Smilin', the Frenchman admits—

"Maybe I *have* try the little trick."

Then he tells the rest. Like a lotta half-smart guys, Hiles never figures on a delayed recoil. He's been afraid of a big howl from our stall, but when it don't come he feels pretty safe. Then, on the 26th, Al's name is posted as driver of the No. 27, an' Hiles is sure he's put it over in a big way.

When Smitty manages to run into the Minotaur chauffeur, accidental-like, an' sobs about bein' barred outa the race, Hiles is all sympathetic and says he can't believe it. Parkin' Smitty in the Minotaur garage, Hiles takes the Frenchman's race driver's registry card, gets it O.K'd by the real secretary, an' comes back with a long yarn about how I've doublecrossed Smitty outa the Miller to get Al in.

Smitty pretends to swallow it all, and when Hiles, to show what a good friend he is, invites him to drive relief for the Minotaur team, Smitty's gratitude is really touchin'. Describin' that part, the Frenchman says—

"You know, when he is so kind, I have almost weep the tears."

While we're howlin' at this, a heavy poundin' on the door pulls our eyes to the little windows an' we see the tall frame of J. B. Carson.

"I'll handle this," says Slip.

Carson looks at Slip an' demands—

"How much?"

"Just twice as much as I asked last year," Slip answers.

"I'll pay it," snaps the old war-horse. And takin' us all in with one glare, he says, "I've just talked with the secretary of the Contest Board, and even if Hiles were not barred from the Three-A he would never drive another Minotaur. Duncan, explain to these men that I don't fight that way." And out he goes!

All of us start talkin' at once. Then a bang like a pistol shot brings us up standin'. For a second we look at each other kinda silly, then grin. The right rear tire on the Miller is flat!

Continuing

WHEN THE BRAVEST TREMBLED

By the author of "Days of '49"

GORDON YOUNG

The Story Thus Far:

RAND LANISTER, accompanied by old Bill Raze, left Texas in 1861 to join the Union Army. His mother, a Northern woman who had never been happy in the slave-holding South, had before her death made Rand promise never to fight against the men of her family. Rand's defection from the South estranged his father, angered his cousin, Val Lanister; puzzled his distant cousin Judith, who loved him.

After a cruel experience in Washington, where his Southern name and accent resulted in his being arrested and imprisoned as a Rebel spy, Rand was released through the efforts of a mysterious play-actress who called herself Laura Lorraine.

He later learned that Laura had once been betrothed to his cousin Val—till the engagement was canceled when it was whispered, though never proven, that she was not the daughter of a prominent New Orleans family but possibly a part-Negro descendant of a slave nursemaid.

Rand also learned that Laura was a spy-double, a Southern as well as a Northern spy.

Yet, despite her duty to the South, Laura had used her Washington connections to get Rand out of prison, and had shot and killed a rascally Major Clarky of the Military Police who had threatened Rand's life in her home.

After Rand finally managed to enlist he was made an orderly to Colonel William Tecumseh Sherman. Despite his objections, he was chosen to serve as a spy. His companion on his first assignment into Virginia was Captain Joe Silliker, a native Virginian, who had been living under a cloud ever since the night, some years before, when at a military gathering he had been accused of cheating at cards.

Silliker tested Rand's loyalty to Sherman by asking him how he happened to be carrying a revolver issued to Major Clarky. Certain that Silliker would never betray Laura Lorraine, Rand confessed to his own incriminating presence at Clarky's death.

Eventually the two spies, in gray uniforms which they had stolen, rode up to the old Silliker mansion. The slaves greeted them and said that all the menfolks had gone off to the Confederate army except Massa Bob, who was in bed, a cripple from a fall off a horse.

Joe Silliker proceeded directly upstairs and accused the bedridden Bob of being the man who had cheated in the card game which had lost Joe Silliker forever his good name in the South. Bob, in the heated discussion, confessed that he had cheated and had let Joe take the blame. As Joe left the room he found the hall full of slaves, who had overheard the accusation and Bob's confession.

In the dining room Joe Silliker said meaningly to Rand:

"Did you see how those slaves acted toward Bob after I denounced him as a cheat at cards? Yet if they learn I am now a Yankee, masquerading in Southern uniform, they will think him a hundred times better than I. Rand, I can never

forgive Bob when I think that it was he who made me a traitor to the South!"

RAND and the captain sat at the long mahogany table, so heavy that four men would have groaned to lift it—an ancient, ponderous table over which Colonial gallants had drunk the health of good Queen Anne, and their grandchildren the "demnation" of George III. The extensive sideboard was loaded with pewter and silver plate, glistening faintly in the dim light.

Minerva, her chair by inches just far enough from the table to indicate that she was not eating, sat close to the captain. Virginia aristocrats were so hereditarily established in their social order that they accepted the intimacy of black house servants almost as they accepted their own shadows.

Hastily warmed meats and the cold meats in readiness for the big supper when the Senator returned with his guests were hurried to the table, with corn pone, milk, cream, whisky and wine. Two black girls and a shiny boy bustled and trotted, scolding one another with no anger at all. It was merely their way of showing how eager they were to please as they hurried to and fro under the covered passageway to the kitchen.

The captain could not eat, though Minerva, remembering his boyhood preferences, heaped his plate with gizzards and thighs.

"Honey, why don' yo' eat?"

The captain drank whisky and milk.

Alone with Rand in a walk about the house, they went down some steps on the hillside to where a spring trickled into a moss fringed basin. The captain sat down broodingly. Soon he said, without looking up—

"I ought not to fight against the South, now."

Rand made no reply.

"I can't blame them. They were true to their code, as long as they thought I was a blackleg."

"Colonel Sherman, he didn't!"

"Good old Tecumseh would never forgive me if— The Senator is as much hurt that he unjustly accused me as I was at being accused. I ought to stay with the South."

Rand was squatting on his heels. He picked up a twig, studied it, broke it and threw it aside.

"You sho' they don't already know you've been thick with Yankees?"

"If so, I could explain that away. I never enlisted. I thought I was being badly treated because I couldn't get a commission. Now I see it was the greatest good luck. Almost providential!"

A long pause ensued. The captain spoke quietly:

"Boy, you are Southern too. This is civil war. Men like Johnston, Beauregard, Robert E. Lee—the very finest of honorable gentlemen—have left the Union Army. Besides, somebody over there will find out about Clarky and your Miss Laura, and the Yanks will hang you. You had better stay here. You won't—you can't—make a good Yankee. Your heart is Southern."

"I reckon all you say is maybe true, 'cept I don't care if 'tis or not," Rand replied calmly. "I know she's sho'ly hard when youah folks are Southern. But now that me and you is en'mies, I reckon I'd better be getting to hell out of heah!"

The captain smiled sadly, a little amused.

"I've been friends with enemies often, and none the worse soldier for that, boy. I like you, Lanister. I like you very much."

"Do I tell Colonel Sherman that General Johnston is coming with his army?"

"If you can find out, yes, tell him!"

"I'm going."

They walked around behind the stables, and the captain ordered Rand's horse saddled, with instructions to have it brought to the front of the house.

When they returned to the house a carriage had just drawn up. A fat negro in livery, looking as pompous and

pleased as the charioteer of an emperor, was shouting bossy orders to some more plainly dressed negroes.

Senator Silliker had stepped from the carriage with hand lifted toward some one within, who was obscured from sight by the side curtains that had been dropped to keep out the dust. A negro boy shouted:

"Mass' Joe done come home, Senatoh, sah! He'h he is!"

The Senator, a tall, elderly man, slightly pompous and very erect, turned as if a musket had been fired at him. He wore a long black frock coat, gray velvet vest with silver buttons, a high white collar. His trouser legs were strapped under his shoes, and he carried a gold cane. An impressive, dignified gentleman, the Senator; lean of face, with deep, dark eyes.

"Joseph! My son!" He advanced stridingly and embraced his son with his gold cane still in hand. Everything the Senator said sounded to unaccustomed ears as if it were a memorized declamation. "Ah, my boy! If the abject pleadings of a humbled father can persuade you to forgiveness—"

The captain said something indistinctly, but with a glad face.

"God bless you! The clarion call of the South has brought you home from Europe, and—"

Rand was some feet away, with his back to the carriage. His name was called rapturously by a voice near his elbow. He drew away like a guilty person unmasked, but Judith flung her arms about his neck.

A cousin—or one that she accepted as a cousin—whom she loved was as dear to Judith as a brother; and finding Rand in Confederate gray was like the answer to prayer.

Rand yielded to her embrace with an air of helplessness; then felt his knees weaken and heart jump as he saw who was also leaving the carriage, coming toward them. It was Miss Laura.

"But how can you be here, Judith!" he gasped.

"Why shouldn't I be here? Father is here with the Army. And my brothers. And, oh, Rand, it has been terrible! Valentine won't even speak to father, but I am going to make him. I always wanted to visit our Virginia relations, and I can nurse our soldiers if the old Yankees do fight. Laura, come here! I want my cousin to meet you . . ."

Laura smiled enigmatically, put out her hand and spoke without the least innuendo of recognition; but Rand saw that she glanced keenly, with no liking, toward Captain Silliker.

"—and how I hated him, Laura," said the jubilant Judith, in a flurry of babbling, "when he made me think he was a Yankee."

The inscrutable Laura smiled, then said significantly:

"Your father and Valentine are coming for supper with the Senator. Should be here any minute now."

Rand thanked her with a startled look, took a deep breath, felt his heart thump in his throat and looked quickly at the horse that had been brought to the hitching rack under the oak before the house.

"I've got to be going!"

But Judith clung to his arm and pulled him nearer the Senator, whom she called uncle. Much to Rand's discomfort, the Senator made a welcoming speech, praising all Lanisters as the finest type of chivalrous men. Evidently the Lanisters kept the skeletons of their family closet from rattling, and had said nothing to any one of Rand's disloyalty.

Also in his grave, half declamatory way, the Senator began:

"We visited the Army today, suh. As you know, it is but a few hours' ride. And General Beauregard told me, suh, that General Johnston was—"

"Stop!" said the captain abruptly. "Military secrets should never be repeated!"

"Before members of my own family!" The Senator chastened his son with an indignant look.

"Not even before God, sir! Aloud,

that is. The devil might overhear!"

"Ah, Joseph, Joseph!" The Senator was instantly tolerant and affectionate. "I fear that in your far travels you have grown blasphemous, my boy! But as long as a man, suh, respects God, ladies and his country—"

RAND felt a furtive tug at his sleeve. He turned. Laura pointed to the stirring of dust in the distance along the road approaching the house. She said quickly:

"I felt too sorry for the dear old Senator to tell any one that his son was a Yankee. You, I have loved too much to tell Judith that you were in Washington! Now get away! That is Valentine and your father!"

"Goodby, I've got to go!"

Rand looked at the captain and jerked his head toward the road. The captain signaled with a glance toward the hitching rack. Judith caught Rand's arm, pleading in whispers:

"No, Rand, no! It will be all right now! Val will apologize. I will make him!"

Four horsemen were coming at a trot. In the lax discipline of the war's beginning, men rode behind the lines to enjoy planters' hospitality, even on the eve of battle.

Rand freed himself with jerks and twists as Judith clung, protesting in petulant astonishment. He ran toward the horse.

"Whatever is the matter?" the Senator exclaimed.

Judith told him fretfully, blaming her brother.

Laura moved near Captain Silliker, pointed toward Rand and murmured quickly—

"Why do you remain, sir?"

"After all, you know," said the captain with dignity, "I am Southern!"

"So?" Laura smiled, skeptically and with dislike. "Very strange, sir! Yesterday you were commissioned major, U.S.A!"

"I did not know that. Makes no difference now. Circumstances have compelled me now to choose rather to be a Confederate private."

She looked at him keenly, with hauteur, distrustful. Her beautiful face was hard as marble. She nodded cautiously, not smiling.

"That was why you stopped your father from saying Johnston had arrived with the first of his troops?"

"Yes."

"Very well." She bargained coldly. "If that boy gets away, I will tell no one that you have been doing everything possible to make it unsafe for me to remain in Washington!"

"But won't they know you know he is a spy?" There was a hint of challenge in the captain's tone.

Laura smiled disdainfully.

"Not likely. But *you*, sir, can be thankful that I have given only military information to General Beauregard—not scandal! That makes too much suffering. But unless Rand Lanister gets away safely, I will report you as a Yankee spy."

The captain flinched. She was beautiful, but serenely hard as rock. He unwillingly admired her gratitude toward Rand, but felt himself in a dishonorable muddle. No matter how conscientiously he might flounder, shame was inescapable.

"To get your commission," Laura said with a curious look of triumph, as if it pleased her to see him suffer, "Colonel Sherman personally guaranteed your loyalty, though you are a Virginian!"

She turned away with little flip of her hand, enigmatic but somehow warning.

RAND, with a backward glance, saw that the Confederate horsemen, his father among them, were so near they were already lifting their hats to the ladies.

He shoved aside the black boy who was hopeful of getting a dime, pulled loose the reins, jumped into the saddle and bolted down the road that, passing

the stable, went by rows of negro cottages.

"What the devil is the matter with that fellow!" Captain Valentine Lanister asked, merely curious, looking after the horseman, not aware that he was fleeing. Many men rode madly for no reason at all except to make people think they were important.

No one replied to Valentine's question. The Senator gazed at Judith, waiting for her to explain; and she, with sullen stubbornness, stared at her brother.

The bronzed, muscular Wallace Lanister, ex-ranger, now a captain in the soon-to-be-famous Black Horse Cavalry, swung from the saddle with hand extended in greeting toward the Senator.

"Your son, suh," said the Senator with grave disfavor, "takes a most peculiar way, suh, of avoiding a man with whom he has quarreled! By riding off, suh!"

"Who?" the Texan asked fiercely, jerking back his hand. "Son? What the devil do you mean?"

"What's that you say, Senator?" Valentine, having overheard with half an ear, pushed his horse closer. "Judith, who was that?"

Judith, feeling that she hated Rand for running away, also felt she hated Valentine for being the cause of it, and would not answer.

"Laura," Valentine demanded, "*who* was that?" He looked with rising excitement at the swirl of dust drifting up from under the feet of Rand's horse.

Laura shook her head.

"A friend of Sergeant Silliker's," she said, pointing toward the captain.

But the grave Senator, rather as if he had rehearsed for this scene, thrust a hand into the breast of his coat, tapped the ground with his cane and said:

"The young man was presented to me as Randolph Lanister—"

Valentine cried:

"Rand! That is Rand? In Confederate gray! Judith?"

Judith turned impulsively to the Texan.

"Uncle Wallace, you ought to be very proud of him!"

"Proud!" Valentine shouted derisively, in anger. "Damn spy! After him, boys —traitor and spy! He knows we'll hang him!"

Raked by spurs the horses leaped forward. Judith, almost shrieking, protested—

"No, no, no!"

As Wallace Lanister clapped a hand on the saddle, remounting, she clutched him and held on, pleading.

"Can it be, suh, that your son," said the Senator, pompously shocked and swelling with rage, "is a Yankee?"

Wallace Lanister's dark face turned ashen. The Senator had fought a duel or two in his younger days and had offered to fight many since, but he had never seen such a look in any man's eyes.

"No son of mine ever cheated at cards, sir," said the Texan. He flung Judith aside and jumped into the saddle.

The Senator stood in dazed amazement, angered and speechless. Judith cried, her face in her hands, her head against Laura who held her with protecting motherliness. Captain Silliker bit his lips, looked irresolutely after the whirls of dust, caught the look in Laura's eyes and quickly wiped his face.

The Senator exclaimed rhetorically:

"Spy? Traitor? Were those the words I heard—of a Lanister, suh!"

"He isn't!" Judith sobbed. "I know he isn't! He just couldn't meet Val, and I don't blame him!"

The Senator turned upon his son.

"What do you know of him, suh?"

"I?" Captain Silliker found it hard to withdraw his eyes from the distance, though Rand and the other horsemen were now out of sight. "Why, very little. He was introduced as a Lanister. Naturally I thought—"

"Naturally, suh!" the Senator agreed, satisfied. "A Lanister! What else would any one think, suh?"

The captain looked furtively at Laura and found her watching him. There was no glimmer of mercy in her eyes.

"They all shouldn't have followed! Some should have gone this way." He gestured, explaining, "He is sure to double back after he crosses the bridge and take the field road to the pike. I'll get a horse and ride that way!"

He ran toward the stables. A few minutes later he galloped past them, going through the pines toward the gateway that opened on the pike.

Laura stood, her arms tightly enfolding Judith, murmuring:

"Don't fret, honey! It must come out all right, somehow." Then, inaudibly, "Though only heaven knows how!"

She peered, frowning with distrust, at the captain who rode hard, as if fleeing. She had very little faith in, and no respect at all, for one who she believed had cheated at cards.

RAND scarcely knew more of where he was and where he was going than if he had been blindfolded. For a moment, when he saw that they had stopped before the house, he had a happy flicker of hope that the horsemen would not follow; but he was too inexperienced in deception not to drive in the spurs and ride hard.

Chickens with terrified squawks fluttered off the road before his horse. Dogs yapped. Potbellied little pickaninnies in loose shirt-tails gaped from doorways as he clattered by. A black woman shrieked, threw up her hands and flung herself from the road, scattering the family provisions she had just drawn from the storehouse.

Rand, bending low on his horse, looked backward and saw the horsemen coming. He went down the low hill at full gallop. The slanting sunlight shimmered on the unruffled water as his horse's shod feet rattled stormily over the river bridge. He peered ahead, hoping for some kind of sheltering thicket. But to right and left was cleared land, bounded by zigzag rail fences.

Behind he could hear the staccato drumming of the horses' hoofs as they crossed the bridge. The horsemen were already stringing out, some being better mounted and more reckless riders than others. His father and Valentine were sure to be in the lead.

Sumac and chinkapin bushes, well out of the plow's reach, grew in the fence angles and were even taller on the road's side of the fence. A man might crouch and hide there—but not a man and a horse. Besides, the men behind him were now in plain sight, for the road was almost straight.

He judged that it would be about two hours until sundown, and was not sure whether he wanted darkness or not. It would be all over, somehow, before two hours. Rand knew that he did not have a chance to outride them. His father and Valentine would have very fine horses.

A shrill hail reached him faintly.

"Halt—"

Rand looked back; then he thrust his spurs into the horse's flanks, holding them there. He heard the report of a gun and, turning, saw a puff of smoke floating away behind one of the horsemen now far in advance of the others. This man did not sit a horse as his father did, so it must be Valentine. *Crack,* again.

"Damn youah soul!" Rand muttered. "I sho' got to fix you somehow!"

He peered along the road. Again he saw a bridge. This country was full of rivers. Two clattering jumps, and the horse was across. Then Rand saw that the road parted, one branch turning to the right behind a clump of tall bushes.

He swerved his horse into the turn, and came squarely up against a gate. It looked as if he were caught. Rand scarcely thought about what he ought to do. He simply acted with impulsive resourcefulness and a kind of desperation as he jumped from the saddle and backed his horse into the shelter of the tall chinkapins, drawing his revolver.

Valentine had seen him turn and followed hard, making the turn at a reckless gallop, not knowing that a gate

closed the road into the fallow field.

"Surrender!" Valentine shouted, trying to pull up his horse and level his gun.

Rand, almost pointblank, shot the horse in the head. It fell with a sliding plunge and the thud of great weight, scraping the hard red dirt and carrying Valentine headlong. The revolver dropped from his hand. Rand sprang for it, thrust it muzzle-down into his belt, then opened the gate and led his horse through. He was cool enough to close the gate and slide home the sapling that served as a gate bar.

Two horses, neck to rump, swung round the bend. On one was his father who, delayed in starting the chase, had nevertheless overtaken all but Valentine.

Valentine, dazed, covered with dust and bruises, arose, staggering as if wounded. One side of his face was blackened with deep scratches filled with dirt. The horsemen made their horses veer and plunge wildly to avoid riding him down. Rand shot rapidly at the horses, hitting one, but not his father's.

Wallace Lanister cursed him and drew a revolver, firing quickly. The bullet fairly burned Rand's ear. His father could shoot even from an excited horse.

Rand flung away Valentine's revolver and sprang into the saddle. He was astonished, troubled and hurt. His father's aim had been deadly. His father meant to kill him the same as any Yankee. He had said he would; but to have him try to do it gave Rand a horrid feeling in the pit of his stomach. As he rode he cursed war—and Negroes, the cause of war. He wanted to sob as he recalled the time of his father's affectionate pride in him.

Rand had gained distance by closing the gate. His father impetuously spurred alongside it, bending low in the saddle to throw the bar and push the gate open without dismounting; but the horse was excited and would not stand. He had to dismount.

Another horseman had come up and dismounted, crying out his belief that Valentine had been wounded. Rand's father rode into the field alone, headlong, driving in his spurs.

Crack! The bullet sang as it went by, striking the ground ahead with a spurt of dust.

Wallace Lanister was on a horse bred to stay in a race, lean of flank, broad of chest, strong and tireless. Rand knew that his father, even if silent, was calling him a coward to run now when only one man pursued. Spy, traitor, coward. The last was the worst reproach that could be laid on a Lanister.

Rand said weakly—

"I wish I'd neveh been bo'n!"

There was a sobbing sensation in his throat at the thought of fleeing from his father. He almost felt guilty of a nameless, shameful crime, as if being a Yankee were something foul; but memory held up the picture of his young, blue eyed mother, calm, gentle, lovely.

Rand thought that at the next shot he might fling himself from the horse as if hit; then, when his father came up and dismounted, level his own gun. But that wouldn't do. His father was not the man to surrender simply because he was at a disadvantage.

CRACK! This time the shot was a wide miss. Rand heard the report but not the whang of the bullet. His father would correct that sort of aim.

Rand, low on his horse, peered behind him and pressed the spurs harder. His father was nearer than he had thought. That burst of speed drew two shots quickly, and one seemed to singe Rand's hair.

"Five!" he said to himself, pulling at the reins.

He cautiously recounted the shots. One across the gate; one striking the ground and knocking up a puff of dust; one a wide miss; now these two close together.

It was his father's habit to carry but five caps on nipples, the better to avoid accidents. But perhaps for war he had

loaded all six chambers. He could not reload without slowing down, but the Texan was not the sort of man to rein in his horse because he had emptied his gun.

"Halt!" his father called savagely.

Rand looked back. His father was gaining fast now, prodding the horse's flanks, confident that he could overtake Rand.

"Maybe he's saving that last shot to be plumb sure—if he's got another shot!" said Rand.

Suddenly resolute, he straightened, pulled hard, brought his horse into a walk and faced about as his father reined up beside him, his revolver leveled at Rand's head.

"Now beg, you damn traitor!" His father's look and tone were merciless.

Rand was as nearly pale as his tanned face could be. His mouth was dry and his tongue seemed glued to his palate. He swallowed, almost choking, and worked his mouth, trying to moisten his lips. He gazed at his father and wanted to throw out his arms to him, like a child.

The winded horses heaved as if sobbing, with downthrust heads, their sides swelling and contracting like powerful bellows.

They were alone on the fallow field below the rolling red hills. The sun was beginning to touch tall trees of a distant mountain, scattering deep shadows. The trees of the mountain ridge stood like an army of giants, waiting to march. Darkness filled the shadowed valleys of the mountainside like an impalpable dust.

"Put up your hands!" said Captain Lanister of the Black Horse Cavalry to his son.

Rand shook his head.

"I won't!"

"Put up your hands, sir!"

Again Rand shook his head. He tried to smile, but his lips were stiff.

"Dad, youah gun ain't loaded. If 'tis, go ahead and shoot. I can't stop you and won't try."

Captain Lanister lowered the gun. His eyes did not waver.

"Then you shoot me!"

"I won't!" Rand replied.

"You tried to, you damn traitor, back there at the gate! And you ambushed your cousin like a halfbreed Indian!"

"Me shoot at you, dad?" Rand shook his head again. "I shot at youah hoss. I shot Val's. I could have hit 'im 'f I wanted. You know that. I just wouldn't."

"You're lying—begging off! You shot at Val; and, damn you, I'll make you shoot me! I'll follow you—stay right with you—until you do or we meet soldiers, you damn, murderous traitor!"

"Dad, I ain't, damn it! I'm a spy. So you'd be, too, if you thought you could he'p youah army. And yo' are not going to follow me. I wouldn't hurt youah little finger to save my life! I sho' wouldn't. But I'll shoot youah hoss, dad, like I did Val's. And that other fellow's. And I don't like to shoot a hoss!"

Captain Lanister glared, frowning. Rand had his mother's eyes. He had something of her simple, straightforward honesty; and, in a rough unschooled way, her low voice and intonations in spite of the accent and words acquired by living from childhood in the camps of cowmen. He had believed that Rand did shoot Valentine and that Valentine was wounded, not merely dazed from the fall of the horse.

"Yo' going to turn back, dad?"

"If I go back alone, they'll say I let you escape."

"I can't he'p what they say. But if you follow me, you'll follow afoot. And if yo' want folks to be proud of you 'cause yo' are so loyal you'll shoot me, you'll have to hunt another chance. And I ain't a traitor—no mo' than mother was! I reckon yo' won't say that about her.

"And if Val thinks I couldn't 've shot him instead of his hoss back yonder, you tell him he's a liah and knows it! I'm already sick o' this damn war. Looks like all the trouble I have is with

my own kinfolks. But I don't hate nobody yet: 'specially, I don't hate you, dad. And you can't make me! So you turn right around and start back or you'll have to go afoot. I mean it, and yo' know I mean it, dad!"

Captain Lanister looked long at his son's tense, muscular face. Against his will, his prejudices, his hot oaths, he felt indutiable stirrings of respect for the boy. Rand was in the wrong, utterly, even contemptibly. But, whatever else the Texan thought and felt, he knew that his son was not a coward; and that was the only thing under heaven that could have softened, even secretly, his feelings.

But there was no visible weakening in Captain Lanister's grim face. He merely pulled his horse about and rode away at a canter, stiffly erect. Rand watched and watched, but his father did not look around.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BATTLE BEGINS

RAND rode on, following the old road toward the darkening fringe of forest. A kind of unconscious sense of direction, developed by much riding over trackless country, helped to confirm the feeling that he was going right.

He was excited by the need of haste in getting back to the Army. Perhaps the fate of battles lay in his keeping. He knew that General Johnston was coming, or had come. The Senator had been about to say so.

He pushed on anxiously. His horse was very tired; he was tired, too, from much lack of sleep. His thoughts began to spin fancies. He foresaw the Union soldiers beating the Rebels back, overrunning the country, sweeping down on Senator Silliker's plantation. Then Rand imagined himself appearing and somehow being so heroic as to cause Judith to confess that she didn't care if he was a Yankee. He would also protect the old Senator—even Valentine; and, of course, Miss Laura. His flourishing imagination took everybody into his protection except the crippled half-brother. He let the half-brother fall out of a window and break his neck.

"Shucks!" said Rand, as if awakening and a little ashamed of such silliness.

He was only a private, with nothing but an unregulation pair of jackboots to distinguish him from other privates. Any corporal could order him about.

In the deepening twilight he reached the edge of the field, bordered on that side by a dark growth of pine, and found another gate. He dismounted, opened it, and was startled to hear a voice call—

"Lanister?"

"Who are you?" Rand could dimly see a horse in the shadows across the road and a man standing at its head.

"Silliker! Don't you know my voice?"

"I'm too skittish to know anybody's voice right now. What you doing heah?" Rand was in a mood to be suspicious of all men.

"Waiting for you!"

"You going to try to catch me?"

"Good Lord, no!"

"All right then. Where the hell am I?"

"You are on an almost direct road into Manassas, where the Confederate army has its base. And a man has just gone by to carry word that you are loose behind the lines, and to have all roads, fords and bridges closely watched. He paused long enough to tell me two horses were down, no men hurt, and your father still in pursuit. I thought you would turn and come this way, but I wouldn't have thought so if I had known the old road had been shut in by gates. What about your father?" The captain's tone almost implied that he did not want to hear the answer.

"He emptied his gun. So I told him to go back or I'd shoot his hoss. First time I eveh knowed somebody to make my dad do something he sho' didn't want to do!"

"Listen, boy. I want you to get away. For one thing, I got you into

this. And you must think—I don't know what you think about my turning Rebel!"

The captain paused, hopeful that Rand would say he understood, didn't blame him, or something of the kind; but Rand said nothing.

"You think something, boy. Tell me frankly." The captain was humble.

Rand did not want to answer. He shook his head.

"I got to hurry and get someplace away from heah!"

"Do you blame me? You really don't, do you?"

"I'm not going fo' to argue. Yo' are older than me—smarter a thousand times. Been all oveh the world. I hate to think you'd do what you didn't think was right. And what other folks think—gosh a'mighty, you see how evehbody hates me."

"There is one who doesn't, boy."

"Who? You?"

"Yes, but also a very beautiful woman."

"Yo' are crazy. I bet Judith would scalp me and smile!"

"I mean your Miss Laura." The captain, with no reservation of truth, added, "She is going to more than scalp me unless you get back safely. She told me so in so many words!"

"She sho' is like a guardin' angel to me."

"I don't think I would pick her for a guardian angel, or for an angel of any kind because—"

"Don't make no slurs!"

"—because," the captain continued, "she stops at nothing to gain her end! But she does have a rare quality in women—an almost unheard of quality in an adventuress—and that is gratitude."

"I don't know what yo' are talking about. But if 'adventuress' means bad woman, yo' are a liah 'cause her and Judith are friends! But I can't stand heah talking. I want to know which way to go."

The captain was irritated. Rand was recklessly casual in his use of strong words; but the boy's downright honesty and lack of insulting intention made it seem foolish to grow angry.

"I'll go part way with you, if you like. I can't do more."

There was no urgency in the captain's offer. He seemed to be dutifully clearing his conscience, and perhaps had in mind the report he must make to the exacting Miss Laura.

"All right," said Rand. "You can go a piece."

The captain could not help foreseeing his own difficulties if Rand and he were captured together. He suggested—

"If we meet cavalry, I'll take your revolver and pretend you are my prisoner."

"Oh, no, you won't! No, suh! Yo' throwed Colonel Sherman oveh; and if you get in a pickle, I bet you'd throw me oveh too!"

The captain reddened with anger. He knew Rand did not mince words; but he had not expected anything like this, and was deeply hurt. There was nothing he could do about it except say something hot and quarrelsome, or refuse to force the quarrel when he knew that he was, at least partly, in the wrong.

"Lanister, do you really think that is the right thing to say to me when—"

"You don't believe in niggers. You don't believe in the South's rights. You don't believe the Union ought to be busted. Yet yo' are throwing oveh the only man that believed in you when youah family said, 'Git out!' I 'spose," Rand went on, not angrily, but as intently frank as if reasoning aloud to himself, "that if you eveh get accused of cheating again you'll come right back North to Colonel Sherman."

"Damn you, shut up!"

"Well, wasn't it just 'cause you found out they didn't longer believe you had cheated that you flopped over and turned Rebel? Natur'ly, if they think again you cheated, then yo'll sho' turn back Union. That," said Rand with conviction, "is logic!"

The captain bit his lips, trying not to answer; but the hurt was too much.

"You make me out an honorless dog!"

"Not me. It's all youah doin's!"

"You have no understanding of the years of lonely disgrace, the pull of home ties and—"

"The hell I ain't!" Rand was downright indignant. "My own father's as much Southern as youahs. He hates me. And the on'y girl I—" He broke off, not wanting to talk of Judith. "My family all believe that they—like you said—are fighting fo' liberty! You don't believe that at all. You believe, like me, that this Union oughtn't to be busted up. So you are not doing what you believe is right. I can't argue. But that's how I feel. And I can sort of imagine how Colonel Sherman is going to feel."

Silliker, a man of honor, felt crucified.

THEY rode on in the darkness and presently turned off the pike.

"Hadn't you better be going back?" Rand asked. He was not quite sure that Silliker was taking him by the shortest, or even safest, way.

"I'll go on a little farther."

"Why don't we go back the way we come?"

"Cavalry may be scouring the roads."

The road they were on went winding uphill through lonely woods and became little more than a wide trail over which a wagon now and then had passed. They came to a small clearing. The captain turned aside amid the yelping of dogs and approached a cabin where dim candlelight flickered through an open doorway. Very small children peered out furtively, then a thin woman in a loose, dirty dress appeared. She was fairly young and had been pretty—still seemed so in the semidarkness.

"Does this road cross the ridge and join the Wayteville pike, madam?"

"Who ahr yo'?"

"Soldiers."

"I ain't seed none afore ye." She smiled. "Do all soguhs git them clothes?"

"A uniform, yes. Sooner or later."

She pushed the loose hair from before her eyes.

"Ahr them Yanks plumb crazy? What they wanta come down he'h an' hu't us fo'? Chillun, yo' pappy is a-comin' home in new clothes. Yo' say yo' want tew go oveh the mountin tew the Wayteville pike? Sho', yo'd git all twisted up. Why don' yo' go back down yon?"

"Military necessity requires," said the captain gravely, "that we find the way across the ridge."

She did not understand the words but would not admit ignorance; so she nodded as if convinced.

"Chillun, git tew bed. I'm goin' tew show these he'h soguhs the way. Naw, yo'uns can't go! Git tew bed, I tol' yo! Yo' he'h me?" Her voice was fiercely strident. She flung out her hands as if shooing chickens.

The children tumbled on to a pallet of corn husks, without undressing.

The woman took a stick from beside the doorway.

"It's 'bout five mile tew the top an' trails all twisted. I'm ready."

"But you can't walk!"

"Why can't? I'll show yo'. I'd walk my laigs down tew mah knees fo' tew he'p ouah soguhs. Yo' chillun shet up!"

The captain offered his horse, but she chose to walk. He and Rand dismounted, walking too, letting the horses rest. She had a long limbed stride, the lungs of a hill woman and the pride of doing something for her soldiers.

Rand was frightfully weary. His feet hurt, and sleepiness pulled at his muscles, making him want to lie down and doze. The captain had lost just as much sleep, but did not seem to mind.

"Thah!" she said triumphantly, pointing down into the darkness. "Yo' jus' keep goin' downhill. I'll be gittin' back. I'm might pleased fo' tew have met yo' all."

The captain gave her a dollar. She needed it, but did not want to take it.

"Don' seem fittin'!"

Urged, she accepted, again wished them luck and stood leaning on her staff, watching as they rode away.

NEAR midnight they passed through the tiny village of Wayteville.

"I can find my way from heah," said Rand, putting out his hand. "I'm sho'ly obliged to you."

"I'll go a little farther."

"We're mighty liable to meet somebody." Rand was suspicious.

"That is why I am going. One reason: I want to make sure that you do get through. We'll find the Mississippians and Colonel Reed. The best chance will be to get through his lines. He knows us—or thinks he does!"

They met no one until they neared the camp. A sentry halted them.

"Friends, with the countersign!" Captain Silliker spoke boldly.

Rand admitted to himself that when the captain tried he could surely act like somebody big.

The captain rode right up on the sentry before that backwoodsman said—

"Le's heah thet count'sign!"

"How long have you been in the Army?" the captain snapped.

" 'Bout a mon', mos' neah, I reckon."

"For two cents I would arrest you. What do you mean, letting me ride up on you this way? Too close to shoot—too close to use your bayonet, if you had one. After this, halt the men you challenge. Make them stop. Make riders dismount. Call the corporal!"

"I won't neveh do it agin!"

"Call the corporal!"

"Hi, Co'p'ol! Pos' numbah five! Come a-jumpin'!"

The captain had called Rand to his side. When the corporal came, the captain said severely:

"Instruct your sentries to make all horsemen dismount. I rode right up on this man. It is your fault, Corporal. But I'll overlook it this time. Have some one show us to Colonel Reed."

As they rode along through the sleeping camp, Rand said:

"I've got to remember that trick. You worked it fine!"

"A few months from now it won't work. Before this war is over, boy, you will be in command of men. At least, a corporal soon—"

"I'd sho' like that."

"—then a sergeant, perhaps even a lieutenant. If it lasts long, a captain."

"But I'm willing fo' it to end right quick."

"And when you are even a corporal, make your men obey orders to the letter. Halt and hold Colonel Sherman himself if he can't give the countersign!"

"And wouldn't he cuss?"

"But probably make you a sergeant!"

They sat in their saddles under a tree, waiting. A man came, saying—

"Yo'uns want tew see Pap?"

"Yes."

"Pap he's down to the fo'd with the boys. He's got hisself a swo'd an' new hat. Some mighty 'po'htant o'ders come awhile ago. Ah'm Pap's neffy. Yo' mosey 'long an' Ah'll show the way."

Rand said—

"You'd betteh be going back."

But the captain replied—

"We'll go together awhile longer."

The nephew was talkative.

"Pap got o'ders awhile ago fo' to see that nobody gits through his lines tewnight. Seems like they is a spy loose. Pap's a powuhful fellah fo' to do whateveh he's told an'—"

"Were the same orders given along the entire front?"

"Sho'. The fellah he tol' Pap this spy is a-weahin' a cav'ry unahfo'm lak yo'all's."

The captain cleared his throat. Rand said—

"Spies sho'ly ought to be hung, if they get caught!"

"Maybe yo' think Pap wouldn't?"

The nephew was challenged. He answered—

"Shet up!"

The sentry said—

"Is thet yo', Bud?"

"Sho' it's me. An' a pahr off'cers fo' tew see Pap!"

"Well, you all come a-runnin' if you wanta see the fun! We 'uns is goin' hang a damn Yankee spy."

"An outpost hang a spy?" the captain exclaimed.

"Sho' as shootin'!" the nephew answered with pride. "Alabama boys hung two couple days ago, thah in the woods. We 'uns went oveh tew see 'em. Come on. Let's not miss nuthin'!"

They came upon a half dozen men of the picket camp about a small fire with a blackened coffee pail at one side of the red coals. The fire, out of sight of the ford where sentries watched, gave light to chat by and kept the coffee hot.

This was not the same ford where Rand and the captain had crossed the night before. But these were the same kind of men, drawn from the back country of lower Mississippi and hurried, without uniforms, almost without firearms, halfway across the continent to the defence of Manassas Junction, then the military base of the Confederate Army.

Lanky, slouching, lithely muscular men, shy of speech, with staring eyes and a half sad look. They and their kin were to be famous for stark fighting and the paternal discipline of their unmilitary officers. Some squatted, some leaned on long rifles—flintlocks even. Rifles that had meandered in pioneer hands from early Virginia, across Kentucky's dark and bloody ground, and at last, having blazed at redcoats in Washington's time and shot at Indians all the way to the Mississippi, now returned near their forges to fight again for what was conceived to be homeland and liberty.

COLONEL REED was standing with his shoulder against a tree. A sword hung at his belt as if he didn't know what to do with it. The scabbard's tip dragged the ground. He still wore his butcher knife, needing it to cut up his meat. A sword was all right for toasting bacon, but disadvantageous as a dinner knife. His new hat was pushed far back on his head. His jaws worked slowly on a quid of tobacco. Reluctantly he withdrew his gaze from a thin man in a blue uniform who was held by two soldiers, coatless and in butternut trousers.

"Howdy, boys," the colonel said with friendly recognition to Rand and the captain. "Ah got me a problum he'h!"

Rand noticed a vague, bulky shape sitting on the ground near the colonel's feet. He peered closely, leaning forward, and discovered that it really was old Bill Raze. Mr. Raze unblinkingly stared across the firelight at Rand and the captain and grumbled—

"Some fellers ain't got no princ'ples at all!"

Rand rubbed his mouth and grinned a little, pleased to be near Bill even if reproached in the same words he had lately used to him. The captain knew that Mr. Raze was a scout and counted on his friendliness.

"Boys, this he'h fellah," said Colonel Reed, waggling his thumb at the Union soldier, "come a-snuckin' up to one o' my sentries out thah an' says he wanted fo' to d'sert the Yanks an' jine. But Bill he'h—"

"I'm a Southerner!" the fellow gulped; adding, with a whine, "The Yanks made me join!"

"Pap," said Mr. Raze calmly, with firmness, "like I've told you, if you don't hang him, I'll cut his throat. An' he'll know why!"

"But you can't treat a man in the enemy's uniform as a spy!" Captain Silliker was resolute. He stepped nearer, protesting with a gesture. "He is a prisoner of war."

"'F this he'h is wahr," a soldier asked, "why can't we uns treat him like an en'my?"

"Because he has surrendered," said the captain.

Mr. Raze spoke coldly, eyeing the captain:

"You shet up! These boys here all know me. I've et with 'em, slept with 'em, skunned 'em at poker. They know what I tell 'em is purt-near so. I've got a busted leg, but if they don't hang 'im, I'm goin' to take him off in the bushes an' cut his throat. And I'd do it if you was Beauregard hisself. So shet up!"

"What's the matteh with youah leg?" Rand went close, anxious.

"A damn fool dropped his musket on a stump. I kin still hobble." Mr. Raze lifted a forked sapling, which he used as a crutch. "You step up closer to 'im there, son, an' take a good look. Then maybe you'll agree he needs hangin'!"

"I'm Southern! The damn Yanks conscripted me! I want to join your Army," the man begged abjectly.

"If us Rebels was lice—which no damn man had better say—" Mr. Raze paused to spit at the red end of a stick in the fire. "But if we was, we wouldn't let you on the same skunk with us!"

"What's wrong with me?" An injured whine rose shrilly in the deserter's pleading.

"Bad mem'ry, 'r eyesight!" Mr. Raze grunted. "I wouldn't hurt my leg to 'commodate a feller I hate as much as I hate you, or I'd stan' up and let you see what's wrong with you."

Rand had been peering at the tall, pale man whose lip was fringed with a black mustache. Rand muttered in amazed anger—

"I'll be damned!" Then he strode forward, jerked off his hat, put his face up close to the deserter's and said, "My name's Lanister! 'Member?"

And Geold, Major Clarky's spy-hunter, leaned back, struggling as if to escape the ghost of a man he had murdered. He tried to scream, but fear held his throat as if with a clenched fist. The soldiers jerked him up roughly.

"Yo' ain't no Reb," one soldier drawled languidly. "Yo' ahr a cowa'd!"

Men grinned slowly, spat, and fixed their eyes demandingly on their colonel.

"What yo' know about him, son?" Colonel Reed moved nearer to Rand, impatiently kicking the sword out of the way of his foot.

"There in Washington, if anybody didn't talk through their nose, he re-po'ted them to the military police as Southern spies an' lied about what he'd heard 'em say. Gosh a'mighty, he sho'ly ought to be hung!"

"He will be, 'r wuss." Mr. Raze rose, heavily moving his massive body. He clapped the forked sapling under his arm, and swung himself, his useless leg dangling, nearer the prisoner. "I'm full o' wonder as to how he ever got grit enough to put on soldier's clothes!"

"That," said Captain Silliker, "is easily explained. He enlisted merely to get into the military police. Somebody decided that he wasn't fit for the work, so he was put into the ranks. Now he is deserting."

"I can give information about the Yankee army!" Geold whimpered.

"So kin I," said Mr. Raze.

"Take me to General Beauregard. I demand to be taken to General Beauregard!"

"Listen, Pap." Mr. Raze confronted the colonel and spoke firmly, without excitement, as he fingered his bowie. "You hang 'im, here an' now, or I kill 'im!"

"But the man has to be treated as a prisoner of war when he's in the enemy's uniform!" Captain Silliker was almost desperate. "You men yourselves will be court-martialed if—"

"Um-hm." Mr. Raze made the sound slowly, scanning the captain's uniform. "Y'mean, f'r instance, if I'd seen him loafing round, say, Colonel Sherman's headquarters, friendly-like, then seen him over here in a gray suit o' clothes, it'd be all right f'r to hang him?"

Captain Silliker replied coolly—

"Yes."

"Then it's a matter o' clothes?" Mr. Raze asked.

"We can took these heah clothes offen him, Pap," a soldier suggested helpfully.

"Jus' what I was thinkin'," said Mr. Raze. "He kin be hung naked f'r as I

care. But I swear 'fore St. Peter"— he was really swearing before the captain— "he's goin' to be dead, an' right soon. Thar's no two ways to that! An' I never told a lie in my life—not that kind, nohow."

"It will be murder," said the captain.

"What if 'tis?"

"Against the rules of civilized warfare."

"What if 'tis?"

The captain had nothing more to say. The soldiers muttered approval of Mr. Raze's calm answers.

"Ah swear Ah sho'ly don' know what tew do about it!" Colonel Reed removed his new hat to scratch his head, pondering.

GEOLD, feeling his captors' hands relax in the intentness of listening, jerked. There was a flurry, a crackling of trampled twigs; hasty, half smothered oaths. With eel-like slipperiness, Geold shed his coat, leaving it in the strong, detaining hands, and leaped backward. He stumbled, crashing into the dark tangle of bush.

Men started up, blurting curses, momentarily confused. Rand clapped his hand to the holster and pushed out at the colonel, who stood in the way before him. Colonel Reed tripped over his unfamiliar sword.

"After him!" Silliker ordered sharply and pointed, starting ahead.

But Mr. Raze, with one sweep of his improvised crutch, surged forward in a long, lunging stride. A gleam of bright steel passed through the firelight. The bowie had a razor's edge and the weight of a hatchet. The target fell, a writhing blot of deeper darkness on the ground.

A sound like a wounded animal's threshing beat the darkness, along with sobbing, frantic yells. Soldiers, not yet used to war, closed in on the dying man, lifted him by arms and feet and brought him back into the firelight.

They were half ashamed not to try to do something helpful; but hardened themselves with awkward grimness and were silent except for one boy whose face twitched.

"God, but he's a human bein'!"

Pap Reed pushed the boy away, not roughly. He spoke with a solemn tone—

"This heah is wahr, son."

Rand felt uneasy, yet was fascinated. Captain Silliker had looked upon all sorts of violent death in many countries.

"I'm glad you did it," he said to Mr. Raze.

Mr. Raze gave him a look, folded back his beard, spat and made no reply. He hobbled near the body on his crutch, bent down, took hold of his knife and jerked. He slowly wiped the blade back and forth on Geold's blue trousers.

Mr. Raze returned the knife to its sheath, hobbled to his tree and sat down clumsily. He lifted the wounded leg into an easier position and rubbed it a little, then drew his pipe.

"What ought Ah tew do now?" Pap Reed asked blankly.

"Nuthin'," said Mr. Raze. "Han' me up a coal, Bud."

Pap's nephew bent to the fire, selected a live coal, took it up between thumb and finger and dropped it into Mr. Raze's extended pipe.

"Thankee, Bud."

By way of returning the favor, Mr. Raze held out his twist of tobacco.

"Thankee," said Bud, biting off a hunk as big as his two thumbs.

"Colonel," Captain Silliker explained, "tomorrow morning report to your commanding general that a Union deserter changed his mind, tried to escape and—"

"—didn't!" Mr. Raze interrupted calmly, blowing smoke overhead.

COFFEE was poured into two tin-cups and offered first to Pap and Mr. Raze. Pap blew off the top of his coffee, spilling a little to get rid of the grounds.

"Yo' boys was a-wantin' fo' tew see me about somethin'?"

"Sho'!"

Rand sat up as if reminded; then stopped, unable to think of what else to say. He was unschooled in the necessary inventiveness of spy work.

The captain, however, spoke persuasively:

"Colonel, we want to go out there and stir up the Yanks a little as we did last night. Let them know we are still here."

Pap chuckled, approving.

"Does git tiahsome settin' heah. Yo' all is plumb full o' ol' Nick, ain't yo'?" He gazed at them paternally. "But Ah can't let yo' through my lines tewnight." He wiped his mouth on one sleeve. "Bud, give these boys some coffee."

"But if we tried it," Rand asked pleasantly, "what would you do, Pap? Wouldn't shoot us, would you?"

"Yo' dickences know blame well Ah wouldn't! Bud, yo' jes' grab a holt o' them critters!" Pap grinned in friendly triumph. "Yo' ain't goin' to ride through my lines tewnight!"

Rand grinned wearily as he saw Bud take hold of the horses' reins.

"We may as well go back then." The captain was resigned, or seemed so.

"Bill," said Pap to Mr. Raze, "this heah is a chanct fo' yo' tew git toted intew camp. The boys'll let yo' ride one o' thah critters, won't yo', boys?"

"You bet!" said Rand.

"W'y don' yo' ride t'otheh un, Pap?" Bud suggested.

"'F the boys don't mind, Ah'll do thet. My co'ns has been hu'tin' some. Jess, yo' an' Bud he'h come along back so yo' can fetch some vittles fo' breakfas' back down heah."

While Mr. Raze was being helped into the saddle, Rand cautiously asked the captain—

"How about me bolting?"

"Don't try it. There's a man on guard at the ford. These fellows would yell, and he would be laying for us."

"Fo' *us?*"

"I am going back with you."

"Gosh a'mighty. Yo' are? Why?"

"You can guess, I think."

"Colonel Sherman?"

"Yes. And Private Lanister!"

THE hub of a transport wagon had split under the jar of a heavy load on rut-filled roads. The load had been transferred to other wagons, and this had been left by the wayside until such time as a wheelwright could send another wheel. The organization of the army was lax and inept. The wagon had been forgotten. Pap Reed had his boys drag it over to their camp for his headquarters. Not having a tent, Pap found that the canvas on the great bows of the wagon served admirably.

A hound, tied to a wheel spoke, came from under the wagon, wriggling, but did not bark. It strained on the rope to get near the men. Bud gave it a casual kick.

Rand and the captain were helpful in getting Mr. Raze off the horse. He had his rifle in his hands, his sapling crutch under his leg. At the first chance Rand said—

"We've got to make a break fo' the Army!"

Mr. Raze grunted forbiddingly.

"W'y don't yo' boys stop fo' breakfas'?" Pap was warmly cordial. He put his hand on Rand's arm. "Lay down heah undeh the wagon an' take a nap, son. Yo' know, somehow, yo' seem like home folks. Most o' the young off'cehs around he'h in fine clothes, they is so't of stuck-upish. Yes, suh."

Rand grinned, thinking of what Valentine's face would be like if Colonel Reed invited him to lie down under a wagon and take a nap.

"We'll stop a little while," said the captain.

Rand rubbed his horse's nose.

"Ain't they some feed and water fo' ouah hosses?"

"Sho'! Bud, yo' take these critters to water. An' they's some hay oveh back yon."

The colonel squatted sociably on the

ground. Rand, worn out, leaned against a wagon wheel and the hound snuggled against him. The captain stretched out on the ground, leaning on an elbow. They needed Mr. Raze's advice.

Rand dozed. The colonel talked. Mr. Raze impassively listened. The captain's head was no longer propped up. He lay face-down on his forearm.

Rand was aroused by a rap of Mr. Raze's sapling crutch on his knee.

"Come over here, closer, son."

Rand moved. The captain was already alongside Mr. Raze, not having slept at all—just pretending until Colonel Reed went to bed.

Mr. Raze spoke in a slow, muffled grumble.

"All the woods 'tween here an' there is full o' soldiers, waitin'. Been waitin' all night. The Yanks are goin' to move. Beauregard is waitin' f'r 'em. You couldn't get through nowhere on hossback. You can't get through at all now."

"I am going to try." The captain started to rise. "There is news that has to get through!"

"I'll go too." Rand stirred.

Mr. Raze's powerful hand gripped his arm.

"Set down!"

"But, Bill—"

"You ain't goin'. Not if I have to raise a rumpus f'r to keep you."

"Why not?"

" 'Cause I say not!"

"Any reason that ought to keep me ought to keep him!"

Mr. Raze shifted his head a little to gaze up at the captain.

"I never changed his di'pers when his maw was busy, ner paddled his behind f'r squallin' without good reason."

Rand swore at him, embarrassed, and intimated that Mr. Raze himself was once a squalling infant, and got paddled —or should have!

Mr. Raze serenely ignored the imputation of a babyhood. He addressed the captain.

"Even if you got past the Rebs, the Yankees'll shoot you. Yestidy mornin' I went acrost an', bein' in a hurry, went straight to where I knowed they was a picket. The feller up an' shot without a word. Jus' blind." Mr. Raze tapped his leg. "I kep' still. Him an' the other fellers thought maybe it wasn't nuthin' after all. They was too scairt to come out an' see. So I crep' off, cut me a saplin', an' come back here. I says to myself, 'You damn idjits, just f'r that you can find out f'r yorselves that General Johnston is come."

"Have you been to a doctor, Bill?"

"Doctor! What's a ball in your leg when you've had 'em in your gizzard? I'll larn them fellers to holler 'fore they shoot."

A DISTANT boom, lone as a signal gun, burst upon the stillness. Then came the screech of a shell. Rand leaped up, looking. Mr. Raze, too, lifted his face. The captain attentively stared at nothing. He had heard thousands of shells and knew that his ears, better than his eyes, could tell where this one was going.

"To the right. Over behind us," he said.

All about men shook themselves out of blankets, sitting up in the dawn, jumping up, gazing overhead, calling to one another and yelping joyously—

"They's goin' to be a fight!"

Colonel Pap Reed poked his head out over the wagon sideboards, blinking.

"W'y the hell couldn't they wait a spell? Ah was havin' a nice dream 'bout a possum hunt. Hi, Jimmy! Jim-mee!"

Men took up the shout for Jimmy. All through the camp it rang.

A boy, little more than a child, came running, spraddle-legged, with a drum dangling against his knees. Pap ordered—

"Jimmy, frail hell outa thet drum!"

Jimmy swung about, planted his heels firmly and began a terrific, untiring rattle. The echoes fluttered away through the woods. Men ran about, guns in

hand, gathering into groups. In the distance bugles were singing, and Jimmy's drum was answered by other drums.

Again, *boom!* Another shell rose. Men stared overhead, shifting their feet as if about to run.

"Nearer," said the captain, not stirring.

Later it was learned that this shell struck the tent of one of Beauregard's staff officers.

Colonel Pap Reed came from the wagon, his sword and scabbard in one hand, his boots dangling in the other.

"This he'h wahr business is all new to me."

He fumbled with the sword. The captain attached it to the colonel's belt, fastening a clip to the scabbard ring so the scabbard would not drag on the ground.

The colonel took a chew of tobacco, sat down and pulled on his boots.

"Ah reckon we uns is ready fo' to fight!" He spoke proudly, looking at his men who had gathered into groups under the impression that they were falling in by companies.

"We can't stay here," the captain said quietly to Rand. "Somebody will think it queer we don't join our command."

An orderly came at a gallop, making straight for the wagon.

"Hi, Colonel! The general says to let the boys eat, then be ready to mahrch!"

The orderly gave the captain and Rand an inquisitive glance, but did not presume to question them.

The colonel stood up, stamped on his boots, settling his feet, then waved his arms with a scattering gesture.

"Go eat!"

The captains of company groups repeated the order. The men scattered like children out of school, feverish and gleeful. With amazing quickness, since nearly every one of them was used to the woods and had hunted from childhood, little fires were built and bacon was sizzling on ramrods or green sticks, and coffee was bubbling in pails.

Boom! Again the rifled cannon, with the loudest voice that was to be heard that day, roared; but the shell went far overhead.

From far off to the north came a dimly heard rattle of muskets; and the first Battle of Bull Run—known to the Confederates as Manassas—began.

Rand and Captain Silliker hastily mounted. Mr. Raze called peremptorily. But Rand only waved a hand.

"Take good care o' youah ornery old hide!"

They rode away quickly, not knowing where to go, but having to go or be questioned as to why they lingered when fighting had begun.

Presently they overtook marching troops.

"Pass by as if we were on staff duty!" said the captain.

Rand was in the lead. He punctiliously saluted the Confederate colors and everybody who looked like an officer. A burly man on a black horse barred the way.

"Yo' are a staff officer, Lieutenant?"

There was a star on the officer's collar.

"Yes, General!" said Rand.

"I'm General Jones. Were you looking fo' me, sir?"

"No, *sir!*" Rand was emphatic about it. He did not want to have to improvise any orders for this efficient looking general.

Captain Silliker, who knew the names of Confederate commanders, spoke quickly.

"The Lieutenant, sir, is looking for Colonel Evans. I am on my way to General Elwell."

"Evans is at Stone Bridge, Lieutenant," said the general. "But, Sergeant, I'd like to give you a copy of my orders to take to Elwell since you are on youah way to him."

Rand looked quickly toward the captain, and the captain furtively signaled him to proceed. So Rand rode on alone, with no idea of where he was or where he was going.

He simply rode.

CHAPTER XIV

BULL RUN

BULL RUN was a mixed up sort of battle, jumbled, clumsily maneuvered, and full of blunders. "Well planned but badly executed," said Tecumseh Sherman when many officers and all newspapers accused the defeated McDowell of folly and drunkenness; and some even accused old General Scott, the Virginian, of having betrayed the Union. "Well planned, but badly executed," the stiff-necked Sherman repeated years afterward when he was a famous general.

That day Confederates fired on their own troops. Union soldiers fired on their own troops. It was almost impossible to distinguish friends from foemen. Many Confederates had no semblance of uniform—not even the white rags on their arms, which were worn by some. There were troops that thought their new uniforms much too nice to be spoiled by sweat and blood, and so took them off. Both Beauregard and Johnston wore the blue uniforms of the Regular Army. Union soldiers wore blue and red and gray. The militia of various States had been sent to the front in whatever picturesque finery was pleasing to politicians. Many Northern privates went into the battle wearing more braid and bigger epaulets than Grant ever wore in his life. The Confederate Stars and Bars, from a distance, especially in smoke, was indistinguishable from Old Glory. After Bull Run the Confederates adopted a battle flag so no such mistakes would be made in the future.

In the camps about Manassas many Confederate privates had body servants, with trunks and fine wardrobes. The personal wealth of the forty men in one company of Georgian cavalry was nearly a million dollars. Other regiments were made up of poor backwoodsmen in huck shirts and butternut trousers.

Men of both the North and South almost defiantly resented the right of military authorities to interfere with their personal privileges. The privates and officers of the Fourth Pennsylvania displayed this personal liberty by marching off the field when the fighting began. Commanding officers helplessly let them go.

Not so William T. Sherman. He declared that if any of his brigade refused duty he would shoot them down; and the mutinous Irish of the 69th New York and the mutinous Scots of the 79th cheered. Their colonels clamored to be put into the battle front, and were. The day being fearfully hot, the Irish threw away coats, shirts, undershirts and, stripped to the waist, went into battle with muskets bouncing on naked shoulders.

Sherman, seeing a Confederate horseman cross Bull Run, knew the river must be fordable at this point and threw his brigade across; and the Confederates admitted that it was this brigade which nearly routed them. Cameron, colonel of the Scots, was killed leading his regiment—a stubborn regiment. Yet—let historical psychologists do the explaining—they were so mutinous after the battle that Sherman trained shotted guns of artillery on their tents to hold them in camp and keep them from deserting. A few weeks later they were disgraced on the army rolls as mutineers, and their flags ceremoniously taken from them.

Out of Sherman's four regiments that went into battle, two were mutinous, a third doubtful. Yet under Sherman they fought as hard as any men on the field, suffering heavier losses than any other brigade. They did not break and run, but formed the rear guard of the routed army. Beauregard, twenty years afterward, commendingly remembered their steady retreat, "protecting the rear of the routed forces."

Bull Run, except for its deadliness, was a comic opera sort of battle. McDowell had sent word to Washington

that next day he would march on Manassas, and the news spread through the streets. The city planned to go watch this battle—which ought to have been fought three days earlier, but was delayed by wagon trains that came late, bringing sowbelly, hardtack and powder. Sightseers, as if a battle were a kind of circus, streamed out of Washington in carriages and tallyhos, with basket lunches, parasols and fair ladies under Leghorn hats. The more fashionable wore the feathered Eugénie, fresh from Paris. Governor Sprague of Rhode Island, a busybody marching with State troops, arranged an exclusive battle party with roast chicken and champagne.

Neither McDowell, nor any one else in either army, knew how to handle troops. Not even General Scott—"in fifty years never defeated," but now too aged and ponderous to take the field—had ever commanded more than eight thousand men in one maneuver, much less in a battle. McDowell, in supreme command of the field, was really a major; three months before he had been merely a captain.

This day 18,572 Union men crossed Bull Run; 18,053 Confederates met them. Though the Union Army was defeated, and the Confederates almost defeated, both sides had reserves that did not fire a shot.

McDOWELL had concentrated his army at Centerville. Shortly after midnight in the early hours of Sunday, July 21, it began milling about, entangling its columns to get into position to surprise the Confederates. The flanking column marched, stirring a cloud of dust in the morning light. The unsuspecting but alert Confederates, under Colonel Evans, saw the dust and without orders shifted forces to meet it. Nevertheless, the plan almost succeeded.

From early dawn until past midafternoon the armies fought, bunglingly, without coordination, almost piecemeal. The battle tide swayed back and forth. The Confederates were the first to try to run. Seeing them in flight, McDowell, with a Napoleonic gesture, sent off word of a great victory. Washington rang bells and said prayers of thanksgiving. The rebellion was crushed. That showed which side God was on.

Congressmen, Senators, fair ladies, the rabble and tree-climbing sightseers, cast about for shady grass plots to rest and lunch, jubilantly. Artillery thundered in the distance. The Rebels were running.

They were. But it happened that the backwash of the fleeing Confederates came up against Professor Thomas Jonathan Jackson, whom his pupils disdainfully had called Old Jack; an awkward man, abrupt, laconic, secretive. From that hour he was to be known as Stonewall Jackson. It was Stonewall Jackson's way, when his troops were being driven back, to order a charge—and lead it!

That day he led a charge that pierced the Union center. A fatalistic man, he neither expected to live through the war, nor desired to. But until shot down accidentally by his own men some two years later, he led a ragged phantom of an army that outmarched cavalry and depended largely on the Union Commissary for supplies.

General McDowell, having sent off his message to Washington, was eager to force the retreat into a rout; so he ordered two batteries of regulars to a knoll known as Henry's Hill, where a woman had been killed in bed by a Union shell. Those batteries, Griffin's and Ricketts's, were supported by the flashy New York Fire Zouaves so skilled in acrobatic drill.

Some accounts say those batteries were blazing away in an artillery duel, others that they had not yet fired a shot, when suddenly a regiment of infantry burst through the oak thicket nearby. Captain Griffin ordered his gunners to load with canister and fire. Lucklessly, the chief of the Union Artil-

lery happened to be present. He peered forward and peremptorily ordered Griffin not to fire, assuring him that these were Union reenforcements. A mistake. They were Confederates, Alabamans—men who carried long knives and aimed when they fired. They fired. Every cannoneer fell dead or wounded at his guns. They charged. The fancy Zouaves, the most fêted, petted and applauded of all volunteers, threw down their guns and ran. Two companies of the Black Horse Cavalry dashed from the woods, pursuing them.

At the sight of the red-trousered Zouaves fleeing, other soldiers gave ground, retreating; and still others followed. At first it was nothing like a rout. Troops simply began to march off the field. Some officers tried to rally them; other officers led them rearward. Many detachments held stubbornly in line, but with support on both flanks withdrawn they were driven back.

The disorderly retreat flowed upon the baggage trains. Confusion began. Teamsters cut horses loose, mounted and rode rearward, bellowing, as was to be the way of teamsters all through the war. Tumult increased. The rout came upon sightseers, upon Congressmen and Senators in carriages with fair ladies under parasols. Frightened horses were cut from traces and mounted by terrified men. Coaches were overturned, basket lunches scattered. Women ran stumblingly on their French heels.

Soldiers flung away everything they carried, the better to run. They fought with officers at the bridles of horses, wanting to ride. Tumult spread into frantic disorder. Panic followed. Terror drove the rout. Darkness came. Rain followed. Confederate cavalrymen squatted on the field, eating roast chicken and drinking champagne.

All through the night a shattered army ran or trudged back—back over muddy roads toward Washington where the bells had been rung and prayers of thanksgiving said for victory. In the wet dawn the unpursued army huddled on the banks of the Potomac and clustered in struggling mobs to get across the bridges, with eyes turned rearward in dread of the terrible Black Horse Cavalry, which did not come.

The Confederate army had been as disorganized by victory as the Union by defeat, and was satisfied to shoot at stragglers, loot the deserted field, eat basket lunches and drink champagne.

In the gathering darkness on the battlefield, one man groaned irascibly at the folly of profitless victory.

"Give me ten thousand men," he said, "and tomorrow I will hold Washington!"

He was Thomas Jonathan Jackson, that day battle-christened Stonewall. Military students still dispute as to whether or not he could have taken Washington. Jefferson Davis, thin, small, erect, unwell, always in pain, rode on the battlefield and was saluted in triumph by his victorious soldiers; but was afterward blamed, unfairly, for withholding pursuit.

That day the Union lost 460 men killed. The Confederates 385.

Later in the war these same armies met and fought, stood fast, and bivouacked on the field ready to renew the battle at dawn, though one man out of every four was killed; but that day, on both sides, they were merely civilians in uniform—some not even in uniform.

THAT day Rand learned some amazing things about war; things that he would later tell to a short, heavyset man, with black eyes and a villain's sort of mustache—Phil Sheridan, the greatest cavalry leader in the North. But when Bull Run was fought he was a second-lieutenant in California, later to be made a quartermaster and remain for a long time obscure and unsuspected of qualities for leadership.

Rand found that a man in Confederate uniform, on horseback, could go galloping all over the battlefield, talk with generals who never questioned his

identity and were ready to obey the supposed commands transmitted by a supposed staff officer.

"If I had known what to say," Rand related, "I could have had Reb generals moving troops to just where McDowell wanted 'em!"

In the closing campaign of the war, Sheridan threw forward Union men—Rand among them—in the guise of Confederate staff officers, who gave false orders, thereby confusing the Confederate battle plans and putting troops into positions where they could be smashed and captured.

When Rand rode away from Captain Silliker he did not have the haziest idea of what he ought to do, except that he said to himself—

"I'm a gone goose if I don't get across the river!"

He found marching men, or men who stood leaning on their arms, waiting everywhere. Later in the war he would have classified them by brigades and divisions. Now he mistook regiments for brigades. Quite instinctively he tried to look like a staff officer, spurring by with a hasty salute when high officers looked as if they were about to speak. His distinctive pair of jackboots gave the impression that he was not an ordinary officer, and his experience as Sherman's orderly was helpful. The time or two when he found troops crossing the road, and so had to stop, he asked for Colonel Evans. That was the first name that came into his mind; then he would gallop on.

Suddenly he came behind the lines of men that fired spiritedly across the river. There was a bridge, and Rand thought of bolting across. He reined up, looking about.

"Who yo' looking fo', suh?" a voice asked.

Rand saw a sturdy man on horseback at his side with a star on his collar.

"Fo' Colonel Evans, suh!"

"Evans is oveh thah on the heights. Ordehly—take the lieutenant to Colonel Evans!"

Rand could not turn or bolt without betraying himself. He rode with the orderly, hopeful of a chance to dodge away. The next thing he realized, the orderly had stopped and a man with field glasses in his hand was saying—

"I, sir, am Colonel Evans!"

Rand said desperately—

"General Beauregard's compliments, suh, and he asks—"

Rand had not the faintest idea of how to finish, and in a flutter of bewilderment was trying to imagine what Beauregard would like to know. He furtively spurred his tired horse and made a great pretense of having an unmanageable mount while he tried to think. Besides, Rand had no proper understanding of military routine or he would never have suggested that Beauregard would communicate directly with the colonel. Etiquette required that he communicate through the colonel's commanding officer. But in the heat of excitement, Evans overlooked the mistake and finished the question for Rand—

"Why I have moved from the bridge without orders?"

"Yes, suh," said Rand, much as a drowning man reaches for a plank.

"That, sir, is why!" Colonel Evans pointed at the dust cloud moving down the Newmarket road; dark clusters of men could be seen breaking into lines of skirmish. "The Yankees are coming on the army's flank. I must have reenforcements! You can see for yourself!"

The next moment Evans's few pieces of artillery opened fire, and a charging column of blue and red trousered men surged into view.

"At least twenty thousand men are coming! Tell the general, in God's name!" cried the colonel.

RAND could not linger to watch the fight. He wheeled his horse, riding back the way he had come. The battle noise grew. Shells crashed into the woods. From time to time the great rifled cannon boomed. Men screamed,

unaware that they weren't talking conversationally. Smoke rose from muskets as from a smoldering fire, sifting through the trees. Rand met men advancing at the double quick. A mounted officer barred his way, demanding—

"What news from the front, sir?"

"Evans reports twenty thousand men in front of him, suh!"

"Good Lord! Does Beauregard know?"

"I'm looking fo' him!"

"I heard he was at Mitchell's Fo'd!"

"I'm obliged, suh!"

Rand saluted hastily and rode on. From time to time he asked the way to Mitchell's Ford, the better to make sure that he did not find it. He had the hazy notion that a commanding general sat down somewhere, received messages and sent orders.

He came suddenly face to face with a group of cavalrymen, and at a glance saw they wore precisely the same kind of uniform as his own, which Silliker had called the Virginia Grays. There was no chance to turn back without having the action regarded with suspicion. Men were looking at him. Rand felt his heart beat his ribs like an excited prisoner beating jail bars. Desperation made him bold. He charged straight at the captain, reined up and swung his arm backward, pointing.

"General Beauregard's compliments, suh, and he says fo' God's sake to go he'p Evans!"

The captain looked hard at Rand, not suspicious but curious.

"Who are you, suh?"

"Lieutenant—Silliker." He jumped at what he knew was a highly respected name in this part of the country. "Just got home from Texas yestiday—day befo'e," he corrected as he realized that one day was a bit too brief. "Lost all track o' time."

"And a staff officer at once!" The captain, not ill-naturedly, but justly, resented such favoritism. "Tell General Beauregard we obeyed promptly, suh. Company, *attention!*"

Rand galloped on, with the relief of one who again breathes easily. He rode about, losing sense of direction, track of time, taking care to keep away from Mitchell's Ford and hoping for some way to get loose from the Confederates and rejoin his army.

At last, without the least idea of where he was going, he turned into a country road. The rattle and boom of guns had almost quit seeming strange. No men were along this road. He wondered where it would take him. These farmers' roads squirmed about like crippled snakes. He paused, partly to think, partly to let his horse rest, and saw a soldier slip out of the woods, staring backward anxiously. Every aspect and move denoted the skulker.

"Hi, you!" Rand called, wanting to ask directions.

The fellow whirled about, dropping his gun. Then, seeing only a lone officer, he snatched up the gun and leveled it.

"I ain't goin' back!" he sobbed, snarling. Something had shattered his nerves. He was crazily fearful.

"Oh, shut up. Listen. I want to know—"

"I'll kill you!" the fellow screamed.

The musket was discharged, but the bullet went far over Rand's head.

"Damn youah soul!"

Rand spurred down on the fellow, drawing his revolver; and as the man swayed back, staggering in haste, Rand leaned from the saddle and struck. The long barrel fell on the man's head, and he crumpled at the roadside, his body lying on the leaves and grass, his feet in the dust.

AT THAT moment Rand became aware of approaching horses and found himself confronting four or five mounted officers who were galloping hard and had just appeared at a turn in the road. They reined up sharply. In the lead were two men, both small, in blue uniforms. The soldiers with them were in

gray, some with much gilt. One of the men in blue was about sixty, with a short gray beard and strange eyes—almost benign, yet wary. He had the thin lips of one who thought much and said little.

His companion, also a small man, was rather larger than he, very trim, with an air of elegance, like one born to purple and fine linen. A handsome man with bright, dark brown eyes, a small mustache and the merest tuft of beard on his lower lip. His movements were quick, his speech quick, with the slightest inkling of something foreign in his tone.

The younger, handsome general pointed dramatically at the soldier by the roadside.

"What's the meaning of this? We heard a shot. Why did you kill that man?"

"I neveh!" Rand was indignant. "Damn skulker—he shot at me!"

Men looked at the revolver in Rand's hand. One of the officers in gray dismounted and ran to the soldier.

Rand grasped the revolver by the barrel and thrust it out.

"See fo' youahself, suh! No cap fired. I whaled him on the head."

The officer in gray straightened after stooping over the body and tossed the soldier's hat aside, saying:

"He hasn't been shot, sir. A welt on the head."

"Good!" The alert brown eyes of the young general sparkled with a look of approbation at Rand. "Who are you?"

There was a kind of crisp gentleness in this fastidious officer's voice. He was military to his fingertips, but a pleasant gentleman even when, as now, hurried and impatient to gallop on.

"I'm looking fo' Beauregard!" said Rand boldly, using the unofficial countersign that had so far let him pass everywhere.

"I, sir, am *General* Beauregard!"

"My holy gosh!" Rand blurted.

The steady-eyed little general and the flashing-eyed Beauregard both peered in stern rebuke, not amused at the queer exclamation.

"Well, sir, General," said Rand hastily, "Colonel Evans presents his compliments—" That oft repeated phrase learned as Sherman's orderly came easily to his tongue and gave him an extra second in which to think. "He says, suh, he can't hold the Yanks without he'p!"

"Colonel Evans sent you directly to me!" exclaimed the punctilious Beauregard.

Not even the shock of battle or the prospect of defeat could make him forget military etiquette.

"You bet he did!"

"What is your name?"

Rand again almost said Silliker, but recalled that the Senator and Beauregard were friends. He was sweating profusely; and, with no time to think of a better name, gave his own.

"Lanister? Related to Captain Valentine Lanister of my staff?"

Rand with quick glances searched the faces of the staff and, not seeing Valentine, said—

"Cousins, suh!"

"Fall in, Lieutenant. Stay with me!"

Rand wheeled and put his horse shoulder to shoulder with the last orderly in the group; and they rode on at a headlong gallop.

"W'y didn't yo' shoot 'im?" asked the orderly, pointing at the soldier by the wayside.

"Been too much like murder. And who's the otheh man up there with General Beauregard?"

"General Johnston."

Rand had nothing to say, and began fretfully to wonder how all this was going to end. He—a spy—had offered his loaded revolver to the commanding generals of the Rebels. And here he was now, riding with their staff, like somebody of importance. He looked repeatedly over his shoulder lest Valentine should be overtaking them. He anxiously asked himself what were they doing, riding into the thick of things?

He could not quite clear his mind of the preconception that commanding generals sat off somewhere, listening to reports and sending orders.

The notion left him long before the war ended. All the field generals of the Confederates rode about under fire. All the distinguished Union generals, except one, were in the thick of battles. McClellan could not endure the sight of the wounded; yet his personal bravery was never questioned. Grant, perhaps more even than McClellan, hated the sight of blood, and actually shrank from it. But he would not give way to this sentimental dread, and was abused as heartless and stolid. No one but his chief-of-staff knew that he threw himself on his cot and wept after the first battle in the Wilderness.

During the Civil War very few generals died in bed. The Union lost thirty-four killed in action, seventy-one wounded. The Confederates had forty-five killed; eighty-five wounded. Soldiers in those days did not say—

"Here's the general, so we're in a safe place now."

Rand wondered whether Beauregard or Johnston was in command. A quarter of a century later the generals themselves were disputing, not without acrimony, as to which one had commanded at Bull Run.

THEY swung off the road at a gallop, crashed headlong through a path in an oak thicket, came to a swale beyond which was a hill where all the confusion of utter defeat met their eyes.

Men were fleeing around the base of the hill and down from the sides of the plateau. The wounded squirmed in the arms of men who were helping them off, and all about lay men shrieking in pain. The great rifled cannon that had opened the battle in the early dawn boomed above the rapid banging of field artillery like the voice of a giant. The field batteries were firing with terrific rapidity, and the rattling muskets sounded like popcorn on the fire.

On the flat crest of the hill officers could be seen dashing about wildly, waving swords, gesticulating in angry pleading. Men ran, some as if reluctantly; others with empty hands and wide open mouths. There was a turbulent human roar over the field, like a rushing wind, and, in the distance, thunder.

Rand was sympathetically dismayed. He forgot cause for rejoicing at seeing the enemies of his army in flight.

Neither Beauregard nor Johnston drew rein. They rode furiously, Beauregard in the lead with one arm upflung. Frightened soldiers paused. Thin, scattered cheers went up. Men stopped, hesitating. Some turned at once, following their generals. It looked like the rout of a mob, a mob that carried guns.

As they rode up the slope, Beauregard turned in his saddle, shouting—

"Reform these lines!"

He bolted off alone, waving his arm, his excited shouts faintly heard. Groups answered with cheers.

Rand saw General Johnston stop, turn slowly, coolly, and look across the disordered field. He had the calm air of watching men on parade. Near the edge of the hill was a large group of men standing irresolute and anxious. They had withdrawn from the battle, but were not yet fleeing. Johnston rode toward them at a gallop. A moment later these men were tossing their hats, yelling. They were Alabamans. Every one of their field officers was gone. They had not known what to do until Johnston appeared, reformed their lines and led them to the firing line.

Rand, not fully conscious of what he was about, did as he saw others doing and tried to rally the irresolute. He rode before running men, blocking their way, shouting hoarsely; and presently he became angrily in earnest as line after line was partially reformed, only to crumble the moment the shouting officers turned elsewhere. Shells pounded

the trees, and bullets sang like maddened bees. But Rand grew too furiously exasperated at the unsteadiness of the half formed lines to notice where shells were striking. He rode on the fleeing men much as he had ridden herd on frightened cattle, knocking some of them over, pointing to the line, cursing.

A colonel came up, took command of a line Rand and another staff officer had got into semblance of order, demanded Rand's name and complimented him.

Rand and the other officer bolted forward toward a confused mass of retreating men who suddenly had begun to mill about helplessly. As he got in among them his glance lifted toward the edge of the wood and he saw why these men had stopped running and begun to mill. In the midst of all this frantic disorder there stood a thousand men leaning on bayoneted guns, impassively gazing at the rout and waiting. A tall, black bearded man, broad of shoulders, rode slowly up and down his line, flinging up his hand in curious, abrupt gestures, palm-out. From time to time he turned, sweeping the ranks with a glance, making sure his men stood firm.

A handsome general with an imperial beard, who rode stormily among the rout, cried in a voice that reached afar as he pointed toward the tall horseman:

"Look at Jackson's Brigade! It stands there like a stone wall!"

Men looked, saw the impassive, resolute line, took heart and turned about with a sudden willingness to be reformed and led.

At that moment Beauregard, always dramatic, was riding forward alone under fire with regimental colors in hand, letting the banner flutter. He stopped and planted the color staff on the ground. As if at a signal they understood, men surged forward with officers cheering and waving their swords. Other standards were lifted. Officers swayed their folds in the air as if the banners were wind-blown, planted the staffs, called, gesticulating. And men came, stood in lengthening lines, moved forward—nervously, but forward into battle—rallying to the colors.

Then abruptly the firing slackened; the artillery all but ceased. The deep-voiced Parrott rifle that had begun the battle from across the river boomed from time to time, a lonely giant's voice. Elsewhere cannons were stilled. McDowell, a sick man, brought on to the field in a carriage, was beginning his great mistake after sending word of victory to Washington. The confused lines of the triumphant Union infantry were being halted, reformed. Some on the plea of weariness were sent to the rear; others were massed for the charge up the wood-skirted heights behind Stone Bridge; and Griffin's and Ricketts's rapid, hard-hitting batteries that had shattered the Rebels were silenced by orders to move forward and take a position on the hard-won Henry Hill near the Confederate left flank.

Griffin, a thorough soldier, heard the order in amazement, and demanded a written copy that he might not afterward be held responsible for such an unwise change of position; but he obeyed promptly.

That change of position silenced the batteries for some twenty minutes and gave the Confederates a period of calm —a dangerous gift to make during a battle to such men as Beauregard, Johnston and Jackson.

A FALLING shell shrieked with deadly nearness. On all sides men ducked. The shell burst. A horse and rider were pitched sidelong through the air, falling as if thrown. It was Beauregard. Men cried out. Horsemen spurred forward.

Beauregard arose and waved his hand, reassuring the army. Cheers went up. He took a step, limped and paused; then he lifted a booted foot, looked at it closely, smiled, waved his arm again and pointed at the boot. Fragments of

the shell that had killed his horse under him had carried away the boot heel.

An officer who had just arrived on the field reached Beauregard before the others, dismounted with a swinging jump and saluted. That was cool gallantry. He was offering his horse to the dismounted general.

Beauregard accepted it with a graceful bow, as much at ease as if in a parlor. He even paused to speak a moment with the officer as if telling something of personal interest. Then the young officer began to look all about, as if searching for some one.

Rand caught a full view of his face.

"Holy gosh! Val!" he exclaimed. Then he drove spurs into his horse's flank, bolting, but not rearward. That would have been too much like running away. He rode along before the Stonewall Brigade, saluting the gaunt, stern Jackson, and a minute later crashed into a cow path through the oak thicket.

Unexpectedly he came upon men lying and sitting at the edge of the woods, facing a small clearing. They were not in uniform. At first Rand mistook them for wounded and stragglers. A tall, bareheaded man, sword in hand, stood up and greeted him. It was Colonel Pap Reed. He had lost his hat and thrown away the scabbard because it tripped his feet.

"Howdy, son!" said Colonel Pap, grinning.

Rand dismounted and took some deep breaths. Here at least he did not have to pretend to be carrying orders. His horse was worn out, and he was exhausted, too; or felt so. Men came up, slouching along lithely, wanting news.

"How yo' making out, Pap?" Rand asked.

Colonel Reed spat.

"Ah been excitedeh, sah, on possum hunts." The colonel fingered Rand's coat. "Yo' been neah hit yo'self, ain't yo'? Be keerful, son, 'cause Ah bet they is a powuhful pu'ty girl somewhah as would cry her eyes out, huh?"

Rand looked down at his toes and wondered. But he had little time for that.

Several men shouted at the same time:

"They is comin'! Heah they is! Yanks agin!"

Pap waved his sword, clumsily striking a limb overhead.

"Don't waste youah powdeh, doggone yo'!"

A lengthening line of blue-trousered men emerged into the clearing, jogging forward. The Mississippians were almost concealed at the edge of the woods. From behind trees and over grass-tufted hummocks they opened fire, raggedly but rapidly, with the accuracy of men who had been hunters from boyhood. A sharp scented curtain of smoke rose and lingered in the trees. Pap squalled at his men, waving his sword.

"Give 'em fits!" The Mississippians warmed to the fighting, jumped up the better to load and remained standing.

The blue line wavered as men dropped. An officer out in front faced the line, his back to the enemy. His voice could not be heard, but the beckoning sweep of his sword indicated what he was saying. He dropped, shot through the back.

It was then Rand learned that a wound in the back did not always mean cowardice.

Colonel Reed jumped out before his men, brandishing the sword awkwardly.

"Come on—give 'em fits!"

The Mississippians lurched forward. They had no bayonets, but did carry knives—thought them needful in war. Their charging line was ragged, but the Yankees drew back into the woods. In the confusion of the battle they had lost their way and blundered into the Mississippian hornet nest.

The Mississippians, with primitive logic, thought the spoils belonged to the victors. They gathered up muskets and cartridge boxes; even took blue coats and, though the day was hot, put them on.

"Yo' know," said Pap as he swished

his sword at a thistle top, "wahr ain't like Ah allowed. No, suh. 'Pears like yo' don't neveh git in gougin' reach of youah en'mies!"

A tremendous storm of musketry burst in the distance along with a new sound, never heard before on any battlefield. The Stonewall Brigade had charged.

"And as you run," said General Jackson in his brazen battle-voice, "yell like furies!"

They did. For the first time in the war the Rebel yell was heard—a shrill, terrible staccato cry that sounded above the booming cannon and bursting shells.

Later in the war it was answered by Union whoops, defiantly; but to the end of the war even veterans dreaded the Rebel yell, for it was never heard unless the Rebels were charging.

As Rand, Pap and other men stood with heads cocked, listening, a horseman rode down through the thicket, coming by the same path Rand had used. It was Valentine.

Rand blurted—

"My gosh, Pap!"

"Whateveh is the matteh, son?"

This day's work had sharpened Rand's wits.

"You see that fellow? Don't hurt him, but capture 'im, Pap. Beauregard wants him at headquarters. Beauregard'll maybe make you a general."

Valentine, catching sight of the only man in uniform, rode forward into the clearing. He recognized Rand easily since he was searching for him, and drew his revolver.

Pap stepped forward in a sheltering movement, cutting the air with his sword.

"Whateveh is the matteh with yo', sah?"

"I mean to arrest that damn spy!"

"Sho'! Yo' ahr crazy! Ah know this heah boy!"

"Make him dismount, Pap," Rand suggested.

"Git off that hoss!" Pap ordered.

"Damn you, I'm Captain Lanister of—"

"Damn yo', sah! I'm Colonel Pap Reed!"

"Don't be a fool. That man is a spy, I tell you!" Valentine shouted fiercely.

"Yo' ahr a liar," said Colonel Pap. "Drap that gun an' git off thet hoss! Ah'll tell my boys heah to shoot, an' blame quick! Yo' heah?"

Pap's boys flung up muskets, point-blank. A lanky fellow seized the bridle.

"Git off!" said a soldier, drawing a bead on Valentine's head.

"You'll hang for this!" he shouted.

Except for the bruise and scratches on one side of his face, Valentine was pale as a ghost.

"An' yo'll git shot 'f yo' don' drap thet gun an' git off this hoss," the man at the bridle drawled.

Muskets being cocked clicked ominously.

Valentine with a furious fling threw down his revolver. He swung from his horse and strode toward Rand; but the colonel, with sword's point advanced, checked him.

"Yo' ahr mah priz-ner!" said Pap.

Rand was commending. "Beauregard will be mighty glad to see him!"

Valentine shouted, swore and gestured accusingly.

"Don't let no man talk to you thataway, Pap. Make him shut up," Rand urged.

"Shet up!" said Pap.

"He is a spy and—"

"Yo' ahr plumb crazy! We all know this heah boy!"

"Pap, when you take him to Beauregard, you say to the general that I told you to bring him. Say to the general that I am the same fellow that whaled that skulker oveh the head today, then offered the general my revolver fo' to show I hadn't shot. I bet the general will understand then."

"Sho'," said Pap. "Ah'll tell 'im."

Valentine cursed at him—and cried—

"Y-you damn traitor and spy!"

TO BE CONCLUDED

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

MY FIRST impression of Camp-Fire as editor and *ex-officio* master of ceremonies here was that I had blundered into a place full of flying bricks. It was a revelation to peer into that bulky file of correspondence labeled "Camp-Fire". The fiery letters! The statements and challenges, and counter-challenges and cracks and aspersions! There's a bale of them, this thick; most of them heated in tone, and some of them downright libelous in their zeal.

Well, every man loves a good fight, and the privilege of climbing right into the ring with the contestants in this free-for-all is one I wish I could share with you. To do so properly would crowd all the stories out of the book and start Camp-Fire on Page 1.

There is the Ed McGivern lightning-speed-shooting feud, all begun a while back by a letter from Pink Simms. The weight of highly reputable testimony plainly favors their side. Here is a sample quotation from a letter by Comrade Franklin Reynolds of Mount Sterling, Kentucky:

. . . I know Pink Simms. He's an old Jingle-Bob rider who worked for both the John Chisum outfits, the one in old Lincoln County, New Mexico, and the Cimarron outfit in the Neutral Strip. Some years ago, participating in a six-gun match in Dodge, he used the number one gun of Smith & Wesson's American model. This was the gun that Barry O'Connor and his posse took out of the belt of Hendry Brown (a partner of Billy the Kid in the Lincoln County War and later notorious marshal of wild old Caldwell, Kansas) when they hanged Brown for the robbery of the Medicine Valley Bank at Medicine Bow.

Pink Simms has cut trails all over the West from Chihuahua City to Nome. Gun handlers pretty much everywhere are ready to acknowledge that he is an authority.

I HAD only the intention of pausing to dip into the subject, but these things have a way of growing out of all reason right in your very hands. The above was no more than written when along came a letter from Comrade J. W. Kosir inclosing a clipping from the *Judith Basin Farmer* of Lewiston, Montana, January 25th, 1934. The news story should pretty well settle the subject, even for the die-hard skeptics, so I'll pass it along in part:

Coming within one-twentieth of a second of equaling his fastest time and almost if not a world's record, when he placed five pistol shots in a group that could be covered with a man's hand in the astonishing time of nine-twentieths of one second, Ed McGivern, world's champion fancy revolver shooter, gave the members of the local post of the American Legion a real treat at their monthly smoker staged at the legion hall Thursday night . . .

In addition to the startling rapid fire exhibition, the Lewiston pistol expert demonstrated fast draws, quick shooting, fanning, slip shooting, and the two-gun draw. In this latter event Mr. McGivern made the remarkable speed of placing one shot from each gun on a target in exactly one-half second. Another remarkable performance was his two-gun draw and firing 10 shots in one and four-fifths seconds . . .

SALTED throughout the bale of Camp-Fire correspondence are numerous little nuggets of curious information. These for instance. Paul Annixter, with reference to a late story of his in these pages, comments:

Regarding the much discussed question as to whether the Gila monster is deadly to man or not, I purposely left it open, to avoid argument. There is no doubt in my mind as to the extreme deadliness of this lizard in the wild state, while living upon its usual venomous diet. Exact science has not yet ventured a definite assertion either way. The doubt and controversy on the

matter arises chiefly from the fact that when a Gila monster bites, his two hollow, poison-conducting teeth do not always come into play; and when they do not, of course, the bite is not venomous.

—PAUL ANNIXTER

Likewise, Stephen A. Reynolds, referring to a past story of his, provides medical authority for certain material it contained, David E. Matzke, M. D, deposing:

A very small quantity (a smear) of the raw commercial form of nitroglycerine such as is used to impregnate the absorbent vehicle of dynamite, will, if applied to the temple—and more especially the lips or tongue—cause a rapid dilation of the capillaries, a flushing of the skin, and an appreciable quickening of the heartbeat. In some cases, within the space of from ninety seconds to three minutes, a violent but transitory headache may result.

Fumes of recently detonated dynamite, guncotton or blasting gelatine, when inhaled in moderate quantities, will have a similar result.

AND not only controversy and information turn up, but even such startling statements as the following, unidentified because I cannot now quote the comrade's long and remarkable letter:

. . . I am a nudist! I wonder what Camp-Fire thinks of that? It ought to make quite a stir. But even so, Franklin and many others of note were nudists before me. I am one hundred percent for nudism and its moral effect upon human nature—and yet I was brought from New Mexico to Montana in a covered wagon. (Bet you can't guess my age!)

THEN THERE is the O'Sullivan mêlée, in the latter stages of which certain O'Neills and O'Donnells and others of similar ancestry became actually too fiery for safe handling. . . . And the Custer-Reno controversy, which has prompted several scholarly and exhaustive papers on this subject. One of the best and most impartial is by the well known authority on Western history, W. J. Ghent, and I'd like to find space for it sometime soon. One of the most peppery comes in the familiar voice of Comrade William Wells, who, smarting a little, retorts in part:

. . . Three of the comrades are jumping on me all spraddled out and saying I know nothing about the Custer fight. As to Mr. ——'s "Holier than thou" sneer, I will say this. The only way to strike telling blows at the Indians was to fight Indian style—surprise attacks on their villages at day break. In the dim light it was impossible to tell men from women, and often the women fought with the men. But I defy Mr. —— or anyone else to show one case where the whites outraged their women captives or butchered little children wantonly, which was the universal practice of the Plains Tribes, and of which hundreds of cases are on record.

Custer was defeated because an overwhelming force of Indians, dismounted, fired from cover on his men for hours; the final charge, mounted and on foot, not coming until nearly all the troopers had been shot down; and the Indians besieged Reno in the same way—on foot.

What do you gentlemen think Indian fighting was—an afternoon tea?

IT WAS only after the above paragraphs were set up in type and proof-read in this office that a letter from Mrs. William Wells came to us with the announcement of his death at home in Sisters, Oregon, on January 21st last. It was a shock to us all, and difficult it is to realize that so vigorous a voice is now stilled. William Wells was among the most active of the *Ask Adventure* staff, and a frequent contributor to Camp-Fire. His interest and enthusiasm were unflagging to the very last. He was a part of the Old West which, while it passes, will never die.

This small tribute is inserted in haste following the finished make-up of this part of the magazine. We debated the possibility of killing the foregoing matter, and decided to let it stand. They are William Wells' last words here, spoken as we like to think he would prefer.

Gallantly . . . with his boots on!

A COUPLE of pages of small type are necessary to list all our *Ask Adventure* experts, yet here comes a letter that baffled us for a moment. We have no Fire-Eating Expert.

Chicago, Illinois.

Two years ago I was on a short canoe trip with a man that used to be a fire-eater in medicine shows and carnivals. He would talk of his experiences, but he was rather silent about trade secrets, although he did consent to perform once or twice, which was just enough to arouse my curiosity. Before I could get better acquainted, after we returned to the city, he married and I lost all track of him.

Since then I have tried to learn more of the art

of fire-eating; so far my efforts have been fruitless. The closest approach to some definite information was in a book by Houdini that was obtained at the public library. Even this was too vague to be entirely satisfactory. My object is to learn enough about the method to do some fire-eating on my own hook.

This is being sent to Camp-Fire just on the chance that you may be able to direct me to a source of information. None of the *Ask Adventure* experts seem to expert on this subject, but you might have one hidden in your pocket.

—FRANK SCARBERRY

Mulling over this, we remembered that one of our Writers' Brigade is a magician of considerable skill and authority. He was elected Fire-Eating Expert forthwith. His reply:

Hollywood, California.

Dear Mr. Scarberry:

Your letter to *Adventure* anent fire-eating was sent to me, probably because I have at times dabbled in the Black Arts. I have never eaten fire myself, and my own magical library contains no satisfactory method of the many extant—all of them combinations of illusion and chemistry.

As you probably know, "magic" secrets are considered commercial property by those of the fraternity, and you will probably have to pay in some way or other—perhaps by buying someone's book—to learn what you seek. The information you are after is doubtless contained in Will Goldstone's "Dictionary of Magic," as that very complete and bulky tome contains everything. I don't own one myself, but I know that it is published in London, locks with a key, and is sold to those who sign a promise not to expose its contents to laymen.

Why don't you write the Secretary of the Society of American Magicians in New York, who can certainly put you in touch with some professional fire-eater?

—L. G. BLOCHMAN

THE almost incredible history of a notable document. Maybe some *Adventure* reader has come across it.

Simi, California

I am writing in the hope that this letter may meet the eye of one of *Adventure's* numerous readers who may be able to help. My story is as follows:

At the termination of the Boer war and shortly after peace had been declared, General Lord Kitchener (of Khartum), the commander of the British forces in South Africa met Gen. Louis Botha, Generalissimo of the Boer forces, at a designated spot near the Vaal River, and here was signed what was known as the Peace of Vereeniging (the name of the small coal town where this memorable treaty was signed). A large marquee had been previously erected by order of British authorities. Tables, chairs and a red plush carpet were placed in the marquee, which also contained a large inner section where refreshments of all kinds were lavishly displayed. After certain formalities the treaty was signed by Generals Kitchener and Botha. Added to their names were the signatures of about twenty high British officials and the same number of Boer leaders. A historical document if ever there was one.

As the last signature was placed upon the document, Lord Kitchener invited all present to enter the inner room and drink a toast to the occasion. The all-important document was left upon the table exactly where it had been signed. Amid the popping of champagne corks and during the toast-making, whether from fright at the popping of corks, from lack of restraint or sheer cussedness—*the original peace treaty blew away!* This all important fact was not discovered until the signers were about to depart. Nor was the ORIGINAL ever found by the authorities.

A second session was held, and, the second paper made out and duly signed. This all happened a long time ago—30-odd years. It was just one of those things. To continue:

IN MARCH, 1904, I was crossing over from South Africa on board the S.S. *Doune Castle* headed for the World's Fair in St. Louis. Among the 300-odd Boers on the ship was a certain Dan De Villiers who was acting as a sort of adjutant to Gen. Piet Cronje, who was on board. A friendship sprang up between Dan De Villiers and myself. A curious friendship. For 3 years we had been fighting against each other and in a few months, presto! Close friends. One night he called me to his cabin and ordered a couple of brandies and sodas. He then told me the story of the lost peace treaty much as I have attempted to describe it to you, but with many more details. It appears that Dan was present at Vereeniging during the peace proceedings, acting as adjutant to one of the high Boer officials. He was not, of course, present at the conference. His Kaffir groom accompanied him to look after the horses. It was this Kaffir who picked up the valuable document. He saw the handsome seal attached, liked the look of the silk ribbon with which it was adorned, folded it up and placed it in his hat. Riding back to Pottchestroom soon afterward that Kaffir told his *baas* about it and showed him the document. Dan took possession.

Now Dan was a hard-living, hard-drinking, careless individual (he was shot dead in Los Angeles in 1907). He placed the document with other papers and promptly forgot all about it until on the eve of sailing for America; so he took it along with him. After finishing his story and ordering two more B & S's, Dan reached under his berth, opened his valise, showed me the document, and there and then gave it to me. At first I was a bit reluctant to accept it, but finally did so with the firm intention of one day presenting it to Lord Kitchener.

I WAS offered large sums of money for it at the St. Louis World's Fair, where finally it was framed and exhibited in—I think—the Machinery Building. Anyhow, it was the building in which

the Underwood Typewriter Co. had their exhibit. A full printed description of the significance and value was displayed alongside it, and it was locked away in a safe every night by the Underwood people. After the World's Fair I visited New Orleans, where I showed the document to a number of persons, all of whom were greatly interested, telling them I was taking it back to England to present it to Lord Kitchener.

One day on my return to my hotel in New Orleans my servant reported that my dispatch case had been tampered with and the light lock broken. I looked through my papers and the document was gone—stolen. I never found it.

Now to the point. Thousands of readers see the Camp-Fire pages. It is a long shot, but worth taking a chance on. Has any reader of the *Adventure* seen or heard of the document? If so will he write me in care of this magazine?

—F. J. FRANKLIN

HERE IS a report from an old hand around the fire, a member of the Writers' Brigade and an expert on our Ask Adventure staff.

In camp, Helm Bay, Alaska

I'm flattered that, as mentioned in recent note, the whole force is interested in my present prospecting venture. Haven't permitted myself such an outing since '24.

So far I have located at least one vein cropping which looks like a winner. This ore body shows visible gold at grass roots and will pan an excellent string in the goldpan.

The most favorable part of the area I'm investigating is still in reserve and looks even better than I thought. Covered part of it on a preliminary hike and met two of the most primitive appearing sourdough prospectors you can imagine, occupying a lean-to shelter built of poles covered by strips of cedar bark and walled by blocks of turf, squatting on a high windy treeless bench in an upland basin surrounded by giant peaks. Open fireplace with chimney of logs set upright, bedroll on dirt floor, jerky hanging over fireplace, pots and pans scattered everywhere, and two overalled owners with bushy beards and wild hair offering eager hospitality, viz: big can of java on coals, a hard, tough sort of bread composed of rye and white flour, raisins, oatmeal, and darned little r'isin' powders. They halted construction on a rocker built of cypress boards sawed out with a bucksaw blade stretched on a bent limb. That coffee and cakes sure tasted fine.

Those two prospectors had been trenching and using a goldpan, making a few dollars a day. The rocker will at least triple their take. Mighty interesting to me, because I'm after the quartz from which that residual placer had come originally. It's there waiting.

—VICTOR SHAW

FROM the vantage of the editorial chair, the Camp-Fire is the most interesting and intensely human department in this magazine. There is much other work to do—especially for a brand new editor who must acquaint himself with an inventory of stories long since purchased, prepare them for future issues, read new ones coming in, receive the constant flow of visitors trooping in to ask about the new editorial slant, write to numerous others similarly inquiring by mail; who must, in effect, dig hard and learn his job. There is much to do; but never too much to pause frequently each day and relax over a batch of mail just come in, and experience the warm human contact with people that is the finest reward of all these labors.

It is my private opinion—or rather was, since it herewith is private no longer—that *Adventure*, during these days of hard trial just past and the days of hope in which we are living, has been a little too much withdrawn from the realities all of us have had to face. It is the realities and the facing of them, the battle and the conquest, that create the spirit of adventure by which we all survive and go on. Our nation is launched upon the greatest adventure in its history, and regardless of anybody's opinion of the course, the outcome is one of valiant hope and wonder and suspense. We have no need of donning silken doublet and jeweled sword to go voyaging in search of daring days and stirring deeds. We are in the midst of both, and stormy they are, but undismaying. There is a Master on the bridge, and every blessed one of us is a humble member of his crew, signed on for the duration, not of the trip, but of the very ship's existence.

Adventure and Camp-Fire together cleave to an old, unshakable policy of hands-off with regard to politics and political issues. But there are other issues.

A man whose opinion I respect highly when he speaks with authority, tenders a casual opinion, in a letter to Camp-Fire, that, "The President's forest army seems to be drawing a good many covert laughs here, where we have forest men who know what it is all about. I hope things will work out well, anyhow. But we can't see the sense in putting city men in the High Sticks, and timber beasts on road work in the flat country."

It may be that this man has changed his opinion since writing that. The letter is not recent, and I hope so. He reflects, half unwillingly it would seem,

a rather shortsighted local sentiment which is all concerned with timber and not with the initial aim of the President's program—the *men.*

Sheer self-interest if nothing more would compel *Adventure* to think seriously and long about those young men, the city men in the High Sticks. They, through a couple of years of unemployment and privation, ceased to buy magazines as well as clothes and food and necessities. They were recruited for the forests not because of the economic necessity of the timber trade, but for the human necessity of guarding the nation's first natural resource: its man supply.

What an adventure this past year must have given many a despairing city youth! You've seen the tragic cases as well as I: the young men jobless and lost and full of a sense of their utter uselessness in the scheme of things. It must have been redemption. I know that there were some bad ones who caused trouble, but no army that ever was recruited lacked its share of them. They've been taken care of, I'm told. Better to think of the good ones, the squareshooters who, given a chance, have responded with all the decency in their ardent souls. The valiant youngsters who have made the most of the opportunity they had dreamed of: a year in the wilds, a year of the mountains and the seasons and feel of earth and growth and honest handiwork.

It is reported that their forest labors will prove of boundless profit to the Nation twenty years from now. No balance will ever be cast on the other side of the ledger; but certainly no calculation known would ever be able to reckon the benefit accruing to the generation that will then enjoy that profit: the heritage of health and courage and sanity, and the increment of real manhood.

The C. C. C. program, in the opinion of this editor, is the finest piece of practical good government in the whole New Deal. To be sure, I speak as no authority on the subject at all, and would really like to hear more about it. The weekly newspaper, *Happy Days,* distributed throughout the corps, turns up in this office every now and then, but I'd like to hear first-hand.

In fact, to prove the sincerity of the magazine's interest, I'm going to offer a few modest rewards to encourage reports from the original sources. We'll make it $25 for what this staff considers the most vivid letter; and two others, of $15 and $10. And we'll throw in a few subscriptions to *Adventure* for good measure. Say a dozen, for the next twelve. This is no ballyhoo; merely a blunt invitation to share the hospitality of the Camp-Fire. It is open to all members of the Civilian Conservation Corps in camp anywhere in the country, and all letters received up to midnight, April 20th, will compete for the prizes.

I'd like to hear from both the city men in the High Sticks and the timber beasts in the flat country.

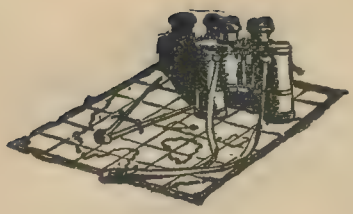
And then along about midnight of April 21st I'd like to sit down and write a letter of my own in answer to the man who couldn't see the sense in the forest army.

THERE is not room enough here to say all that I'd like to say about *Adventure* and its future and the plans we've already laid out for the issues in the coming year. I'll have more to say the next time we get together here. The New Deal in our office is as promising as the greater New Deal which has filled our land with hope. Deflation has shot its bolt, and this magazine is traveling only in one direction now—upward, to a bigger, better and finer *Adventure* than ever before.

I'd like very much to hear from all of you. Letters as informal as these very lines, telling me what you think of our magazine, its authors and its policies, and what you'd like to see it accomplish. I'll try hard to reply to all who write; I can at least assure you I'll read every word of your comment with genuine interest and care. This is not a business proposition. We have a very efficient Circulation Department to take care of the business end. The editorial end of the job is a matter of comradeship and cooperation and mutual understanding. I'd like to hear from you.

Meantime, watch for your next Camp-Fire for further news.

—W. C.



ASK ADVENTURE

For free information and services
you can't get elsewhere

You'll notice a change in the make-up of Ask Adventure with this issue. We've compressed the space given to the listing of our Ask Adventure experts. Don't think this means that there are fewer experts—or fewer departments. No, we've just saved printing space. Letters from readers are constantly requesting that Ask Adventure be enlarged. You have enjoyed reading the interesting, instructive, and often amusing letters which have been of service to others. Well, we will give you as many of them as we possibly can. We have started with a slight increase in this issue—and in the future you'll find even more.

Superior Nags

DO YOU want to ride a real Arab horse? It will run into money, but if you have it, it's worth it.

Request:—"Is it possible to go into Arabia and buy a pure-bred Arab horse?

In what portion of Arabia are the best horses raised?

What would a good stallion cost?

Give me the points of the Arab horse?

Thanking you in advance."

—ROBERT S. WISE, Indiana

Reply, by Capt. A. R. Beverly-Giddings:—Because Arabia is rapidly becoming more and more dessicated the true Arabian breed is becoming rarer and rarer in that country. The best Arabs today are found in the Arab studs in England, Egypt and this country. One of the foremost was that established by Lady Anne Blunt—famous traveler and explorer, and now owned by Lady Wentworth, her daughter. I am not sure that the famous Crabbet Arabian stud, as it was called, is intact today. I think I read recently of a dispersal sale. However, all of Lady Wentworth's Arabs were absolutely authentic. She supplied the Arabian studs we have in this country; in fact, exported the pure strain of Arab all over the world.

The great horse-raising portion of Arabia which gave us the absolutely pure strain of Arab is the central plateau, the Nejd. The tribes in the Hail districts, once the center of horse breeding, have been broken and wrecked by wars and pillage. It is almost impossible for the foreigner to take a good horse of a pure strain out of Arabia, even if he did by some miracle come upon one he could purchase. The authentic Arabs are beyond price; and unless you be exceedingly conversant with the pure-bred Arab you are likely to come out of Arabia with a mongrel or a Barb, as a friend of mine did.

The points of the Arab follow: In conformation he resembles the best type of Thoroughbred, but his head should be extremely beautiful gazelle shaped; his tail is set level with his back and highly arched. Neck is arched, the muzzle very small (the Arabs say he should be able to drink out of a pint pot); the nostrils large, fine, and dilated; the eyes enormous and beautiful. He is comparatively short on the leg with extremely powerful hocks and strong shapely legs. He has beauty, quality and style; he moves freely and lightly. He cannot be too showy or have too much fire. I suppose you know, too, that the Arab is structurally different; he has less vertebrae in back and tail. Look for free shoulder action, rounded outlines, brilliant action; and look for tractability. Even the stallions are gentle.

Put out of your mind the idea of purchasing a desert-bred authentic Arab. Get in touch with one of the well-known studs either here or in England. And be prepared to pay as high as twenty-five thousand dollars for a pure-bred young stallion.

The Arab has greater *natural* speed than any unspecialized breed and his endurance is unequalled. An Englishman—Mr. Frazer—had an Arab horse which carried him 522 miles in 120 hours. In four days another Arab ran 400 miles. Another went the astonishing distance of 1,044 miles in 11 days including halts, with three day's rest half way. There are dozens and dozens of recorded instances like this.

It is one of my dreams to have someday an Arabian stud—a very small but choice one. And so, it was a pleasure to answer your letter on a subject so interesting and dear to me.

Stamp

POSTAGE output in the United States.

Request:—"1. Approximately how many various kinds of stamps, all denominations, have been issued by the United States?

2. Does a stamp increase in value if the perforation is left intact, or doesn't it matter?"

—F. P. ARMSTRONG, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Dr. H. A. Davis:—1. The United States has issued about 690 major varieties of regular postage stamps.

2. The perforations on a perforated stamp must be intact for the stamp to be of any value.

What Price Safari?

CAN an American frontiersman do better than a British aristocrat in the African bush?

Request:—"Why is it necessary—if it *is* so—for a big game hunter in Africa to take a village of negroes trailing behind him? In America, frontiersmen went into and could live forever in the wilderness alone or with one pal, often without a horse. Is this impossible in Kenya, say, or is all this negro business just the swank of British aristocrats? How much does a hunting trip cost down there?

—WALTER CAMPBELL, Oklahoma

Reply, By Capt. R. W. van Raven de Sturler:—It is not impossible to hunt and travel in Africa as a lone man but it would be so hard, restless and exhausting a life that I, for one, who spent 6 years all over said continent, would not even give it a thought.

While one could get along with a good many fewer natives in one's safari than the great safaris, sometimes equipped by veritable nabobs in the most elaborate fashion (men, generally, who do not feel physically or mental equal to unusual strain and exertion in a, to say the least, extremely hot and sometime unhealthy climate), because they do not care to deny themselves some of the comforts and luxuries life was good enough to provide them with at home, does not necessarily mean that the best way of trekking can only be accomplished by a single individual, particularly, a single white man who undertakes a hunting trip in a strange country under to him new and unknown conditions.

(Incidentally for every one of the white settlers and hunters that succeeded in making a poor living in the American forests, you may be sure that there have been ten, of whom we never heard, that failed and miserably perished.)

The physical and climatic conditions in America in the early days of frontier life were very different from those in Africa. The subject is too expansive to fit into the scope and limits available to me in A.A., however, I'll mention one or two reasons. One has to be on one's guard against a number of wild animals in Africa, and that means those animals whose unexpected attack by day or night may easily terminate one's further earthly travels, that never roamed the American forests and plains within historical times and then again, there are the immense stretches of country—no deserts—that are absolutely destitute of game, water or vegetable growths and in which the inexperienced white man would simply perish were he not accompanied by natives who, year in and out, live and thrive in these inhospitable parts of Africa, because Nature equipped them with the instinct to meet the conditions and surroundings they are born into and in which a white man would, without any doubt whatsoever, be lost and die.

But why go to either extreme? I myself have safaried with but 6 natives for more than a year (I knew them well, however), had all the comforts I needed and came out on top. Had I travelled all alone, there is no question that I would have never returned, though I was even then a seasoned trekker with several years experience in Africa.

If you have any real intention to go all alone, I certainly would strongly advise you (as a novice) against any such experiment and, while you might come through successfully, I am willing to go on record that you would not care to repeat the experience. As to horses, they cannot live in the low countries for the sake of the flies that soon kill them off. Mules are little better off, so are donkeys—camels require experience in handling which the average white man does not possess and rarely acquires, so would have to tote all your baggage which would consist somewhat as follows on *your* back. Rifle, shotgun, pistol, all the necessary ammunition which is not easily replaced in the interior of Africa, 2 large canteens, 4 blankets (the nights can be and generally are very cold when one has to sleep in a tree for safety, at times) netting, against mosquito and Tse Tse fly, plenty dehydrated food (you cannot live for any length of time on meat alone) chocolate, coffee (you cannot safely drink water unboiled or Goats milk) 1 or 2 changes of clothing, a poncho, a heavy overcoat, a medicine chest (you cannot afford to neglect the slightest symptoms of African diseases or infections because they would simply be the end of you) frying pan, cooking pot, waterpail, fork, spoons, knives, some sort of skeleton stove, etc., etc., plus a double sized portion of perseverance and willpower, mixed with personal courage, leavened with extreme cautiousness and rapid coordination of physical and mental alertness every moment of the day and night. Add your fare to Africa and back, an extra $500 to avoid any trouble in obtaining entry and other emergencies and a passport, covering any of the countries in Africa or elsewhere and then—stay home—because you will always regret it if you really do attempt the trip.

An ordinary safari of one white man and a white guide, accompanied by from 30 to 35 porters costs in East Africa about 250 Pounds Sterling per month and provides for any ordinary necessity and some comforts, such as cots, tents, bathtub, etc., which at the present rate of exchange at $3.68 per pound, would mean about $920.00.

I take it that your inquiry, in which you touch on your lack of respect for the famous British Aristocracy, is more of an academic than practical issue with you.

Should I be mistaken, however, in this assumption and you really intend to make a hunting trip in Kenya or elsewhere in the territories covered by me for A.A., write me again with full details, and I'll see, if I cannot make some suggestions that will free you from marching between 12 and 15 miles a day in a burning sun while lugging a load of not less than 100 pounds weight on your back, in which condition, you naturally realize that any quick defense to attack is practically an impossibility.

SO Mr. Campbell answered.

Request:—"If the depression ever lets up, I trust that the advice you give will not prove wasted upon me. A friend of mine (who has

hunted in North Africa) and I have planned a trip, and from what little we know Kenya seemed a good region. Our plans one day developed a discussion as to the necessities and staff needed; hence the letter.

Of course we never supposed a green hand could go alone into any wild country and enjoy himself; but the terrors of most parts of the earth have been considerably diminished since Steffansson demonstrated that he could do as well as the Eskimos, just as Kit Carson and Boone did in Indian country hereabouts.

I am sorry that my hastily phrased scrawl seemed to intend offense to the aristocrats of Briton. I happen to have spent three years at Oxford University, and from what I saw of the sons of Britain's ruling class, I concluded that the world does not contain any finer, gamer, or more royal good fellows than the best of them. But there is no denying that they have a tendency to let the servants do the roughing it, which (to some of us) rather takes away some of the sport.

This amiable weakness I am naturally partial to myself; but I thought it possible that they had imposed these comfortable customs on Africa, as they have elsewhere.

—W. S. CAMPBELL

And the reply, by Capt. de Sturler.

I am inclined to the opinion that if you find good hunting grounds, not as much shot-over as Kenya, you would not particularly care, if you went elsewhere. Am I right? Assuming I am, would you care to shoot where, to my knowledge, very few, if more than half a dozen whites have gone, but from where fewer returned. Would you care to help advancing Science and general knowledge by trying to find the place where in all Africa there is the only reasonable chance left to locate the famous "Elephant Burial Ground" and, possibly, secure the Ivory that must have accumulated there for thousands of years?

The consensus of opinion of a number of experienced hunters and travellers, familiar with Africa, and discussing the subject some three years ago, by elimination restricted the location of this "Burial Ground" in a district seldom visited, not easily reached and very likely occupied by hostile tribes, only nominally under the white man's rule, of whom they are not afraid. Had I at the time been able to prolong my stay in Africa, I would have had a try at the thing myself but as my passport was rapidly approaching its date of renewal and my business made my immediate return obligatory, I was, most unwillingly, obliged to depart for New York and so missed, I believe, one of the greatest opportunities in my life.

Talk this suggestion over with your friends that intend participating in your African trip and, should you decide to change your plans, let me know.

I'll be glad to give you whatever data I possess myself, provided that you, should you not go, keep same to yourself.

Mexico

CYCLING down to the capital on less than a dollar a day for two.

Request:—"Two of us are thinking of taking a trip on bicycles from San Francisco to Mexico City. We want to go as cheaply as possible.

What time of year is the best to travel in Mexico? What clothing and supplies should we take? We intend to do all our own cooking, and sleep out. What do you think food would cost on such a trip per month?"

—BOB YATES, Oakland, California

Reply, by Mr. John Newman Page:—The trip is entirely feasible, and would not be very expensive. The first of December would be a good time to start, for you would then have the coolest and driest season of the year in which to do your pedaling. Instead of entering Mexico directly from California, I would recommend entering at Laredo, thus assuring you a splendid road all the way to Mexico City.

Don't take any extra clothing. You can buy whatever you may need en route, and you must cut down weight and bulk. Sleeping out will mean bedding, and that again means weight and bulk. I'd recommend a tarpaulin or ground sheet, light but of the best quality, and two light woolen blankets.

A light cooking kit will be required if you are to do your own cooking. If you do it, your expenses for food will be light—well under a dollar a day for yourself and partner. Don't make the mistake of starting without sufficient funds to see you to your destination and home again, for you will not find work of any kind en route. I can't put that too strongly. Furthermore, if the Mexican authorities suspect that you are short of money, you won't even get across the border.

Finally, you will need tourist permits, good for six months, and obtainable at the Mexican Consulate in San Francisco. Good luck!

Tommy Gun

IN SKILLED hands, swift and deadly.

Request:—"Could you tell me the magazine capacity of the Thompson sub-machine gun, how it is cooled, the maximum and minimum rate of fire, and whether or not it can be fired semi-automatically?"

—H. D. GREEN, Los Angeles, California

Reply, by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—The Thompson is furnished with magazines holding respectively twenty and fifty rounds, the first a single column box type, and the latter a drum with spiral feed. The speed of fire, from the single shot to a trigger pull to upward of a thousand to fifteen hundred a minute, all depends upon the skill of the operator, the reliability of ammunition and condition of the gun. It is air-cooled, and can be fired semi-automatically for individual shots, or full automatically.

A complete list of the "Ask Adventure" experts appears on page 127

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. Neither does the magazine assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment.

Fishing.—JOHN B. THOMPSON (OZARK RIPELY) care *Adventure.*

Small Boating.—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Canoeing.—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 117 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Ill.

Motor Camping.—MAJ. CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., American Tourist Camp Ass'n, 152 W. 65th St., N.Y.C.

Yachting.—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

Motor Vehicles; Automotive and Aircraft Engines.—EDMOND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

All Shotguns.—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

All Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers.—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R.F.D. 3, Box 69, Salem, Ore.

Edged Weapons.—CAPT. ROBERT E. GARDNER, 17 E. Seventh Ave., Columbus, O.

First Aid, Hiking, Health-Building.—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M.D., Box 322, Westfield, N. J.

Camping and Woodcraft.—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Mining and Prospecting.—*North America.*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-precious Stones.—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Calif.

Forestry in U. S. Big game hunting.—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry.—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Box 575, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading.—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

All Army Matters.—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.

All Navy Matters.—LT. CMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U.S.N. (retired), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Fla.

U. S. Marine Corps.—CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, R.F.D. 1, Box 614, La Canada, Calif.

Aviation.—LT. JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" St. N.W., Washington, D. C.

State Police, Federal Secret Service, etc.—FRANCIS H. BENT, Box 174, Farmingdale, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police.—PATRICK LEE, 189-16 Thirty-Seventh Ave., Flushing, N. Y.

Horses.—MAJ. THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1709 Berkley Ave., Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs.—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

North and Central American Anthropology.—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Taxidermy.—SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Entomology *Insects, poisonous, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology *Reptiles and Amphibians.*—KARL P. SCHMIDT, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois.

Ornithology *Birds: Habits, distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tyron Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.

Stamps.—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals.—HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway, at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Radio.—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Rd., Roselle Pk., N. J.

Photography.—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung.—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif.

Football.—JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose St., N. Y. C.

Baseball.—FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post,* 75 West St., N. Y. C.

Track.—JACKSON SCHOLTZ, P. O. Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Swimming and Lifesaving.—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skiing and Snowshoeing.—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Canada.

Archery.—EARL B. POWELL, care *Adventure.*

Wrestling.—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, School of Education, New York University, Washington Sq., N. Y. C.

Boxing and Fencing.—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

The Sea Part 1 *British and American Waters.* Ships, seamen, statistics, record, oceans, waterways, seas, islands.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESENBERG, 47 Dick St., Rosemont, Alexandria, Va. **2** ★*Old Time Sailoring.*—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

Phillipine Islands.—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★**New Guinea.**—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand; Cook Island, Samoa.**—TOM L. MILLS, *The Fielding Star,* Fielding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania.**—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands.**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States, and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, Box 197, Centerport, Long Island, N. Y. **2** ★*Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, India Kashmir, Nepal.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care *Adventure.* **3** ★*Annam, Laos, Cambodia, Tonking Cochin China, Southern and Eastern China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.* **4** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M.D., U. S. Veterans Hospital, Fort Snelling, Minn. **5** *Japan.*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntingdon Ave., Scarsdale, N. Y. **6** *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 1 ★*Egypt, Tunis, Algeria.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.* **2** *Abyssinia, French Somaliland, Belgian Congo, British Sudan, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care *Adventure.* **3** *Tripoli, Sahara, caravans.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.* **4** *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure.* **5** *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar: West Africa: Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, Firestone Plantations Co., Akron, Ohio. **6** *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, and Rhodesia.*—CAPT. F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, R. F. D. 1, Simi, Cal. **7** *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ont., Canada.

Madagascar.—RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe.—G. I. COLBRUN, East Ave., New Canaan, Conn.

South America Part 1 *Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure.* **2** *Venezuela, The Guinas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 414 W. 121st St., N. Y. C.

West Indies.—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Neuva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America.—E. BRUGUIERE, care *Adventure.*

Mexico Part 1 *Northern Border States.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche.*—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Pk., Md. **3** *South of line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Sureno Carranza 16, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

Newfoundland.—C. T. JAMES, Box 1331, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland *Dog-teams, whaling, Eskimos, etc.*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island (Fur Farming).*—FRED. L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, N. Y. **2** ✠*Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada. **3** ✠*Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungova and Keewatin.*—S. E. SANGSTER, care *Adventure.* **4** ✠*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate,* Trenton, Ont., Canada. **5** ✠*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario.*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 269 Victoria Rd., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. **6** *Humers Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Dept. of Science,

Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. 7 ★*Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. 8 *Northwter. and Arctic, Ellesmere Land and half-explored islands west, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland.*—PATRICK LEE, 189-16, Thirty-Seventh Ave., Flushing, N. Y. 9 ★*Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie, Northern Keewatin, Hudson Bay Mineral Belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska and Mountain Climbing.—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 922 Centinela Blvd., Inglewood, Calif.

Western U. S. Part 1 *Pacific Coast States.*—FRANK WINCH, 405 N. Spaulding Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 2 *Utah and Arizona.*—GORDON GORDON, P. O. Box 2582, Tucson, Ariz. 3 *New Mexico (Indians, etc.).*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. 4 (In abeyance.) 5 *Nevada, Montana, and Northern Rockies.*—FRED W. EGLESTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. 6 *Idaho, and environs.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Montana. 7 *Texas, Oklahoma.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S. Part 1 *Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.*—JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure.* 2 *Missouri, Arkansas, Missouri River up to Sioux City, Ozarks, Ind., Ill., Mich., Miss., and Lake Michigan.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.* 3 *Mississippi River.*—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. 5 *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottom.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. 6 *Great Lakes* (all information).—H. C. GARDNER, care *Adventure.*

Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Eastern Maine. All Territory east of Penobscot River.*—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. 2 *Western Maine. All Territory west of Penobscot River.*—DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. 3 *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 1382, New Haven, Conn. 4 *Adirondacks, New York.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. 4 *West Va., Md.*—ROBERT HOLTON BULL, 1206 Second Ave., Charleston, W. Va. 6 *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga., Sawmilling.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure.* 7 *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains South of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

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The TRAIL AHEAD

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A complete novel—

BLACK DRUMS TALKING

by Gordon MacCreagh

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. . . With the suddenness of a rising sky rocket, a scream cut into the normal noises of the night. Long drawn and wailing, it quivered and faded and rose again to a high shriek. The Shenzie porters cowered in the thorn boma.

"Aie! Awowe!" *they moaned. "It is a brush devil that calls one to his death. Let the fires be fed and let no man venture forth . . ."*

It was into that darkness that Kingi Bwana ventured, to challenge the ageless mystery of Africa.

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BY JEFFERSON MACHAMER

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Ex-Lax tastes just like a piece of delicious chocolate! It is gentle as well as effective—for all ages.

Be sure that you get the genuine Ex-Lax — spelled E-X-L-A-X. At all druggists, in 10c and 25c sizes.

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THE CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE

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Frank Crilley, Champion Deep-Sea Diver, *says:*
"A diver's nerves must be in perfect condition. I have smoked Camels for years. They are a milder cigarette and they taste better. They never upset my nervous system."
Miss Elizabeth Harben, Garden City, L. I., *says:*
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Camel's Costlier Tobaccos

NEVER GET ON YOUR NERVES . . NEVER TIRE YOUR TASTE